GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN'S PROGRESS REPORT ON THE 185 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE RURAL ECONOMY (ACRE)

PREPARED BY
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Executive Summary

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The Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) was announced in the December 1999 Throne Speech, with a mandate to explore and generate innovative ideas and recommendations for Government and industry, and act as catalyst for positive change and economic development in rural Saskatchewan.

In accordance with its mandate, ACRE has conducted research and provided four sets of innovative recommendations, totaling 185, to the provincial Government. The first set of recommendations was provided through ACRE's interim report in January 2001. In December, 2002, the Government responded with the release of a document titled *"A Strategy for Rural Saskatchewan: Responding to ACRE"*. At that time, the Province and ACRE hosted a joint news conference to highlight the Rural Strategy and the role played by ACRE in the development of that strategic document.

Following that, ACRE provided further recommendations in the form of supplemental recommendations, including recommendations from subcommittees that had just completed their work and recommendations that had just been passed by the full ACRE Committee.

The Government has examined each of the 185 recommendations and compiled them into this comprehensive report. The recommendations are labeled as follows in the report:

- 7 Initial Recommendations (I – 1 to I – 7)
- 58 Final Recommendations (F – 1 to F – 58)
- 108 Supplemental Recommendations (S – 1 to S – 108)
- 12 Supplemental Transportation Recommendations (T – 1 to T – 12)

From this document, which represents a concerted effort by all Government departments and Crown Corporations to ensure that the document is as accurate and up to date as possible, it can be seen that the Government has made significant progress in addressing ACRE's recommendations.

Interim Recommendations

ACRE Recommendations & Government Actions
Access to Capital
I – 1 That government should improve access to capital funding by: • **Establishing an Agriculture Venture Capital Fund aimed at stimulating new capital investment in large farm related and value-added agriculture;** • **Establishing an Enterprise Investment Fund that would enable equity investment into new expanded agri-business by smaller groups of interested investors in a local community;** • **Establishing a Feedlot Loan Guarantee for the feedlot industry, similar to the Livestock Loan Guarantee Program; and** • **Investigating the development of an Adjustment/Transition Rural Development Fund aimed at smaller on-farm diversification businesses that could assist with generational transfers and rural development.** **Government Response/Example(s):** • APF – Renewal chapter will launch a new education and skills program for farmers, called the "Canadian Agriculture Skills Service", to help farmers and their spouses increase their family income through improved farm practices and building new agricultural enterprises, building new rural business ventures or through obtaining employment income. (See I-2 for more program details) • CIC and IR are exploring a Venture Capital Fund for small business considering the new Investment Saskatchewan mandate and structure and other initiatives in the province.

- Feedlot Loan Guarantee Program (Feedlot Construction Option):
  - Provides a loan guarantee of 25% to lenders who finance the construction of a new feedlot or the expansion of an existing feedlot.
  - The program is available to feedlot operators and provides a borrowing limit of $3 million per feedlot.
  - The Feedlot Construction Option is part of a suite of new program options introduced in 2004 and collectively, these programs have a government guarantee cap of $20 million.

- A second new program that was introduced in 2004 is the Individual Feeder Option.

- A third option is being developed and will provide a guarantee to lenders who advance funds to individuals who wish to make an equity investment in a new or expanding feedlot operation.

- Feedlot Equity Option (Loan Guarantee):
  - The Feedlot Equity Option program provides a loan guarantee to lenders who advance credit to individuals who wish to make an equity investment in a new or expanding feedlot
  - The guarantee provided to the financial institution by the provincial government is 25% of the loan(s) outstanding at the time of first default
  - The program is designed to encourage community participation in the financing of new or expanding feedlots

- Individual Feeder Option:
  - Provides a loan guarantee of 25% to lenders who finance the purchase of feeder cattle held in a feedlot
  - The program is available to individual feedlot operators and provides a borrowing limit of $3 million per feedlot participant
  - Currently there are no active participants in this program. However, once the beef industry stabilizes, the program is expected to begin operation
  - The Individual Feeder Option is part of a suite of new program options introduced in 2004 and collectively, these program have a government guarantee cap of $20 million

- Short Term Hog Loan Program – Deferral Option:
  - As a result of depressed prices and limited cash flow, SAFRR introduced a deferral option under the Short Term Hog Loan program in the spring of 2004 in order to provide the option to hog producers who receive loans under this program to extend the repayment period for their loan

- The deferral option allows producers to defer principal payment on their Short Term Hog Loans for one year

- The Small Business Loans Association (SBLA) Program, which continues to help create and maintain jobs by providing a line of credit to local Small Business Loans Associations, which in turn provide loans of up to $15,000 to businesses that have experienced difficulty accessing financing through traditional means. As of July 2004, the SBLA program has funded over 8,900 new and existing businesses; provided loans totaling $47.5 million; created 9,890 jobs; maintained 9,805 jobs; and over 90% of activity is outside Regina and Saskatoon.

- Agrivision, working closely with labour organizations is developing a labour sponsored venture capital fund targeted at increasing investment in the Saskatchewan value added agriculture.

- The concept of an enterprise investment fund is under active examination and consideration.

- The establishment of Prairie Ventures Fund (see http://www.gov.sk.ca/newsrel/releases/2002/01/21-033.html) addresses this recommendation; Golden Opportunities Fund; Working Ventures Fund.

I – 2 That the provincial government, in co-operation with the federal government, place a priority on establishing a skills development program designed to help producers to remain in rural Saskatchewan by:

- **Assisting producers in improving their farm management skills;**
- **Assisting producers in adjusting their enterprise into new agricultural opportunity areas;**
- **Assisting producers by improving their opportunities for off-farm employment; and**
- **Assisting producers to develop the skills necessary for full-time employment should they choose to exit farming.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- The APF Renewal Program was launched in Saskatchewan on October 1, 2004. This includes the Canadian Agricultural Skills Service which supports skills development and learning. Assistance will be provided to access training in areas such as business management, accounting, finance, human resource management; training for employment; or training to acquire skills for starting a new business. Financial support such as tuition fees for courses, textbooks and travel will be provided for eligible clients with an approved Individual Learning Plan (ILP) who are pursuing new skills to capture new opportunities. Canadian Agricultural Skills Service is expected to be fully operational by January 1, 2005.

- SAFRR created the Agri-Business Development Branch, which includes the former Family Farm Opportunities Initiative (FFOI) to address regional agriculture development needs. Offices are located at: Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Regina, Swift Current, Outlook, North Battleford, Tisdale and Weyburn. Specialists provide leaderships and expertise to entrepreneurs and community groups in initiating and applying business development processes and building community capacity (both human and financial). This is done through building partnerships with people and agencies in order to help clients expand, change or start an agriculture-related business. Renewal Specialists deliver renewal programming in partnership with the federal government under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) Agreement to assist farmers in improving their farm management skills; in adjusting their enterprise into new agricultural opportunity areas; in improving their opportunities for off-farm employment; and, in developing the skills necessary for full-time employment should they choose to exit farming. Total budget for the Agri-Business Development Branch for 2004-05 is $3.8M.

I – 3 That the Government of Saskatchewan facilitate rural development by implementing:

- **An ongoing regulatory review to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of all regulations;**
- **A timely process to examine specific regulatory issues raised by those involve in industry;**
- **A mechanism to guide proponents through the approval process; and**
- **An ombudsman to serve as an independent, third party adjudicator of disputes with agriculture and agri-food.**

All levels of government will commit to clear standards of accountability for development projects.

Government Response/Example(s):

- As part of a provincial Regulatory Reform Initiative announced in 1996, government committee to review all existing regulations within a 10-year time frame. To date, over 81% of the original regulations have been reviewed for relevancy and effectiveness, with a view to updating or repealing them if necessary. The Competitiveness Branch of IR has been tasked with identifying and addressing red tape concerns and business irritants, particularly as they impact small and medium sized businesses in the province.

- GR, SAFRR and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative.

- The new Agri-Business Development Branch (SAFRR) will focus on working with other economic development stakeholders in the region to identify both the competitive opportunities for each respective region and also the barriers that proponents and existing agri-business experience with respect to business development and expansion. This information will be available to policy-makers and will thereby contribute to the policy decisions of government. Agri-business Development Branch will also provide service support to proponents as they pursue their business initiatives.

- Saskatchewan has a Provincial Ombudsman that serves as an independent third party adjudicator between individuals and the Province. There is no intent to duplicate this service.

I – 4 That the federal and provincial governments take necessary actions, including increased funding, to provide universal, affordable access to high speed Internet and cell phone coverage to all residents throughout Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In March 2002, SaskTel announced the expansion of its High Speed Internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years under the province's CommunityNet high speed internet initiative.

- In June 2004, the second phase of CommunityNet was launched. An additional 71 communities are being added to the network. As well, most farmsteads and businesses within 30 kilometres of many existing CommunityNet centres will be able to access SaskTel's commercial high-speed network. December 2004 saw the completion of upgrade installs from one way to two way satellites for 72 First Nations schools thanks to a partnership between SPMC and KCDC. KCDC is a Regional Management Organization that has been contracted to provide program delivery for Industry Canada's First Nations SchoolNet.

- Upon completion of the second phase of CommunityNet, more than 86 per cent of the Saskatchewan population will have access to high speed Internet.

- The Federal Government has made available $7.5 million from BRAND (Broadband for Rural and Northern Development), $2 million from the Northern Development Accord and $525,000 from the federal/provincial Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) over the past 2 years to fund Broadband (high speed internet) in Saskatchewan. The majority of benefactors live in rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. They also provide $5 million for the first phase of CommunityNet and an additional $2.25 million to connect all the libraries to high speed internet.

I – 5 That the Government of Saskatchewan should devote more resources to the immigration file. Among the areas that the government should concentrate on include the following:

- **Ensure that the current Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is fully utilized with a more aggressive marketing approach;**

- **Make the PNP a permanent agreement and negotiate with the federal government to increase the**

number of nominees (as the province feels necessary) under a future PNP;

- **Ensure that the needs of the agricultural and rural sectors be taken into account as the province considers broadening the scope of skills it will consider under the PNP.**

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan discuss with the federal government a Federal/Saskatchewan agreement on migrant workers similar to agreements with other provinces.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR has increased both the human and financial resources that are working to market the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program in foreign markets. Efforts have been mainly focused in the U.K. and Netherlands because, according to Statistics Canada analysis, new rural immigrants to Canada have traditionally come from western Europe and that is expected to continue. As well, the types of skills required to broaden and deepen the rural economy are found in these two markets (e.g. livestock, irrigation, special crops, value-added and distribution). SAFRR has a strategy in these two markets which includes: targeted advertising in the farm press; presentations at agriculture schools; in-person meetings with farmers; booths at immigration trade shows in both countries; provision of marketing materials as support to Saskatchewan realtors promoting their services; provision of agronomic information; and assistance with planning to incoming farmers visiting Saskatchewan.

- The province is opening the provincial nominee program (SINP) which will do away with specific skill categories and make it easier for immigrants to access employment opportunities in any sector and for rural Saskatchewan employers to recruit immigrant employees.

- The Commonwealth Caribbean and Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program was implemented on a pilot basis in 2003 for the nursery, vegetable, fruit and honey industries. In 2003, 21 workers were employed under the program by two nursery operations, one fruit grower and one vegetable grower. In 2004, three beekeepers participated in the program and along with the same operations from 2003 employed a total of 32 workers. The Pilot was agreed upon for a three year period (beginning in 2003). The Pilot was doubled this year (2004), and there is indication of continued demand into the third year. A survey of workers in 2004 indicated a very positive response. Participating employers have also expressed very positive experiences with the program. There have been a number of favourable media interviews with employers.

- This remains under active examination by the ACRE Employment Subcommittee.

I – 6 That the Government of Saskatchewan make a commitment to a major public education program aimed specifically at Saskatchewan that emphasizes our rural strengths and resiliency and the facts about our competitiveness with other provinces - to be contracted through a third party.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Our Future is Wide Open: National advertising in the Globe and Mail and National Post emphasized our competitiveness compared to other jurisdictions. Used some rural-based examples e.g. Swift Current egg carton manufacturer; national TV commercial on Saskatchewan exports featured timothy hay producer and plastics manufacturer in Humboldt.

- Other initiatives include the Saskatchewan Dream which featured successful rural businesses across the province (2001-2003), Growing the Future and Ongoing sponsorship of Rotary's *Your Future is Here* campaign aimed at encouraging Saskatchewan young people to make their career in Saskatchewan.

- Non-government groups have come forward to carry the message of Saskatchewan's strengths and opportunities including Agrivision and the Chamber of Commerce.

- The *Saskatchewan Ambassadors Program* (formerly the Saskatchewan Business Ambassadors Program) – launched in 1998 promotes Saskatchewan as a place to do business. Under the program, people who are traveling outside of the province on business may receive a promotional kit with information on Saskatchewan. The information can be tailored for specific economic sectors and regions of the province. The program currently has about 400 ambassadors.

- As well, reports such as the KPMG Competitiveness Alternatives Report and more recently, the Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan Reports are showing Saskatchewan as a place to invest.

- The upcoming Centennial celebrations will attract individuals into Saskatchewan and both supplement rural economic activity while allowing Saskatchewan to highlight itself as a place to live, raise a family and do business.

I – 7 That the ACRE committee urges the provincial government to take substantive action, including initiating the fuel tax rebate and other positive financial measures, to support the development of the ethanol and biofuel industry, that would closely align Saskatchewan with other provinces in Canada. In addition, the Saskatchewan government should work with other provincial jurisdictions in western Canada to develop a coordinated marketing approach to encourage gas wholesalers and retailers to make ethanol and bio-blended fuels readily available to all residents. Further, that the provincial government mandate increasing levels of ethanol
and biofuels content within defined timelines coordinated with the production capacity of Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has taken a leading role in developing the ethanol industry in Canada. In 2002, the province released the *Greenprint for Ethanol Production Strategy*. Legislation and regulations have been passed for mandating the blending of ethanol into gasoline. Regulations state that 30% of the ethanol market will be reserved for small producers. Based on these policies, investors have committed over $100M to building ethanol plants in Saskatchewan, and many other communities and agricultural organizations have expressed interest in building plants.

Final and Supplemental Recommendations

ACRE Recommendations & Government Actions
***I.* Competitiveness**
F – 1 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan conduct a comprehensive review to assess the province's competitiveness. **Government Response/Example(s):** • A Competitiveness Branch has been established within Saskatchewan Industry and Resources. The Branch will examine barriers to investment and growth through consideration of taxation issues, labour issues, regulatory reform, investment attraction and incentive programs. • The provincial government is participating in discussions to harmonize Securities Commission approval processes across the country. Implementation of a passport system is proceeding with a targeted implementation date of August, 2005. Under a passport system, approval in one jurisdiction will enable an applicant to operate in another jurisdiction which is party to the agreement without going through the Securities Commission approval process again. • The Premier's Investment Attraction Council was formed to seek out opportunities to increase investment in Saskatchewan. • Effective October 1, 2002, the government introduced lower royalty and production tax structures on production from new oil and gas wells and projects, introduced a new system of volume incentives, and reduced the Corporation Capital Tax surcharge. The province also introduced changes to benefit horizontal and deep wells and established a new royalty and production tax regime for natural gas produced by-product from oil wells. • In 2003 the government made substantial changes to the royalty tax structure for potash. The changes

included removing the profit tax component for incremental sales above the 2000-2001 average sales level and permitted capital spending in excess of 90% of the 2001 spending level to be depreciated at 100 %.

- In 2001 the government also made changes with respect to uranium. Taxes were changed from a profit basis to an ad valorum (percentage based on sales) basis and the top marginal tax rate was reduced from 50% to 19%.

- In the 2002 Budget, the Corporation Capital Tax exemption was increased from $10 million to $15 million depending on a company's proportion of employment in Saskatchewan.

In September of 2002, a six year mineral exploration incentive program was introduced. Components of the program include providing incentives to prospectors and exploration companies to initiate new mineral exploration, the development of a competitive diamond royalty and tax structure and rebates on fuel tax used in off-road mineral exploration activities and for remote power generation.

F – 2 Explores the adoption of a "Saskatchewan Value-Added Tax Credit" by December 2002.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Tax Incentive programs for the manufacturing and processing sector in Saskatchewan consist of the Manufacturing and Processing Profits Tax Reduction and the Manufacturing and Processing Investment Tax Credit. Both programs apply to firms in the manufacturing and processing industries.

- The two existing "value-added" tax incentives will continue to be examined in terms of their effectiveness and in terms of government's overall taxation policy and fiscal capacity.

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 3 Ensures consistency in taxation of all rural municipalities and specifically, the application of punitive mill rates.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Local tax tools have been provided to municipalities to promote local autonomy and to give municipalities the ability to manage tax shifts within their jurisdictions to address local circumstances.

- Government Relations (GR) recently completed and publicly released a report examining the use of local tax tools in 2001 and 2002. The report is posted on GR's website.

- GR is working with SARM through its "Clearing the Path" initiative that is intended to remove municipal government impediments to rural economic development. As part of this, SARM is reviewing the application of mill rate factors. Depending on the recommendations that come from the "Clearing the Path" initiative, limitations might be introduced.

- With the 2005 revaluation, the utilitization of mill rate factors will be reexamined by the government to determine their impacts on property tax distribution. In the context of school division restructuring, mill rate factors for the purpose of education property tax will be reexamined. Changes, if warranted, will be considered after the reviews are completed.

F – 4 Explores the potential for a special youth tax structure as a means of encouraging youth to stay in or relocate to Saskatchewan to start businesses and families.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province, is committed to encouraging Saskatchewan students to develop their careers right here at home and is actively pursuing initiatives to make this happen.

- For Example, Saskatchewan is the only province with a graduate tax credit for post-secondary graduates. The Saskatchewan Post-secondary Graduate Tax Credit was introduced in 2000 to encourage post-secondary graduates to stay in or relocate to Saskatchewan to start businesses and families. The Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit is a one-time tax credit that graduates and journeypersons may apply against their Saskatchewan Income Tax. For 2003-04 the graduate tax credit will increase from $350 to $500 for students who graduate from eligible post-secondary institutions after January 1, 2004. The Tax Credit will continue to increase each year to $1,000 by 2007.

F – 5 Takes steps to alleviate the current education tax burden on farmland.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Boughen Commission released its report in January 2004, with 12 recommendations. The recommendations included a reduction in education property tax by $300 million over six years.

- Government responded to the Boughen Commission recommendations on May 13, 2004 with a three phase approach to restructuring the education system which includes a commitment to property tax relief by dedicating 30 percent of any new ongoing equalization funding realized from the Government of Canada.

F – 6 Reduces the reliance of educational funding on the property tax base by completing the major review of the Foundation Operating Grant and increasing the funding for education out of provincial revenues.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Boughen Commission released its report in January 2004, with 12 recommendations. The recommendations include a reduction in education property tax by $300 million over six years, as well as a recommendation to revise the Foundation Operating Grant program.

- Government responded to the Boughen Commission recommendations on May 13, 2004 with a three phase approach:

  1) Restructuring of school divisions to no more than 40 (from the current 82) with enrolments of at least 5,000 students. Boundaries are to be recommended by the Education Equity Task Force. The Minister has appointed Fred Herron (chair), Saskatoon; Al Klassen, Herbert; Shirley Batters, Estevan as members to the Task Force. They are to present the new school division map to the Minister of Learning by November 15, 2004. New school divisions are expected to be in place by January 1, 2006.

  2) Revise Foundation Operating Grant. A committee is currently developing options to develop an equitable, simple and transparent basis for providing the Foundation Operating Grant into the future.

  3) Andrew Thomson, Minister of Learning and Len Taylor, Minister of Government Relations met with delegates from SUMA, SARM and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association on July 20th. At this meeting, the Working Committee on Education Property Tax Relief was established. It represents all

	those agencies in Saskatchewan with the power to levy property taxes as well as government officials. The Federal Government has tentatively agreed to a one-time payment of about $340 million in federal transfers. The Provincial Government has committed to providing 30% of this payment to education property tax relief.
F – 7 Examines the use of the fuel tax exclusively for road Maintenance and construction in the province. **Government Response/Example(s):** • The Province invests about 96% of all on-road fuel tax revenue in the transportation system.	
F – 8 Promotes machinery or land co-operatives, or collaborative ventures that promote the shared use of specialized equipment, through a more favourable tax environment. **Government Response/Example(s):** • Government policy is to provide equitable tax treatment to businesses irrespective of organizational structure. • Saskatchewan Industry and Resources (SIR) administers the Co-operative Development Assistance Program, which could help producers develop means to creatively share equipment, land, or machinery. SIR maintains a network of Co-op Development specialists to assist with such endeavours. • Saskatchewan provides $300,000 annually in funding to Agricultural New Generation Co-operatives Program to provide opportunities for producer groups to work together to develop businesses for producing value-added products from primary production.	
F – 9 Implements a dedicated consumer tax to provide funding for tourism product development and marketing; specifically for rural-based opportunities in Aboriginal, agricultural, cultural and ecological tourism. • Tourism Saskatchewan has researched, and is working with key industry representatives to discuss whether or not there is support from industry for such dedicated tax program.	

- Tourism Saskatchewan currently provides $1.15 million annually to rural travel regions for cost-shared marketing and management support through the Keeping PACE arrangements.

F – 10 Implements a taxation incentive/assistance program to help older farmers pass on the land to a succeeding generation.

- The Agriculture Policy Framework, Renewal Program was launched in Saskatchewan on October 1, 2004. This program pays a portion of the costs for private professionals needed to create effective succession and intergeneration farm transfer plans. Farm families can obtain 50% support to prepare plans up to a maximum of $ 8,000.

- Bridging Generations Program:
  - The Bridging Generations Program is targeted at young people who wish to enter the farming industry or expand their operation
  - The program offers a loan guarantee to participating lenders of 10% for loans that the lender makes to young farmers that are highly leveraged
  - The program has not been approved at this time

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 11 Applies a consistent set of regulations on the use of roads in all rural municipalities (business, farm and private) particularly in the application of road haul agreements.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan is working with Area Transportation Planning Committees in order to address regional planning needs.

- Authority for Rural Municipalities to issue permits for overweight vehicles was incorporated in legislation in the 2003 revision of The Rural Municipality Act, s.180 – 189.

- The Vehicle Weight and Dimension regulations have been amended to allow more flexibility while retaining a core winter weight period.

- Saskatchewan continues to enter into heavy weight diversion agreements with municipalities.

- As a result of a review by GR of municipal road issues in the heavy oil producing area of Saskatchewan, in 2003 amendments were made to *The Rural Municipality Act*, 1989 to provide authority for all rural municipalities to designate primary weights and truck routes for municipal roads. The new authorities provide for harmonization among rural municipalities and with provincial standards, as well as a dispute resolution process when a municipality or municipalities and road users cannot agree to the method of harmonizing weight limits or designated truck routes. The dispute resolution will help to ensure continuity of transportation routes across jurisdictions.

- GR is working with municipal stakeholders to consolidate the rural and urban municipality acts. The consolidated act will propose that both rural and urban municipalities continue to have authority to designate primary weights and transportation routes and a dispute resolution process. It will also propose that urban municipalities be allowed to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.

- GR will be undertaking a review of the road haul maintenance fee structure to determine if any adjustments are needed. Affected municipal and industry stakeholders will be consulted.

- GR, SAFRR and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative. SARM is reviewing road haul agreements, permits and transportation routes.

F – 12 Provides the support necessary to have agricultural industry-wide policies and practices that enhance competitiveness through food safety and environmental practices (consistent with other jurisdictions).

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR is collaborating with federal/provincial partners in the development of traceability protocols.

- Establishment of three new programs within SAFRR will support competitiveness:
  - The Value Chain Program (Food Safety and Regulations Branch) which is focused on developing marketing opportunities;
  - The Food Safety Training Program (Food Safety and Regulations Branch) which is focused on providing funding for training and education of Saskatchewan food processors; and
  - Surveillance (Inspection and Regulatory Services Branch), which is focused on early disease detection

and control, in the interests of food safety and industry competitiveness.

- Monitoring development of Natural Health Products Regulations for effect on Saskatchewan industry.
- Funding and technical support remains in place under Agri-Food Innovation Fund in support of development of industry-led *On Farm Food Safety Programs*.
- Training initiatives: HACCP training, Good Manufacturing Practices, Distance Technology based Food Safety Training in collaboration with SIAST. Distance technology training is expected to go "on line" in September 2004.
- Food Safety and Environment chapters of APF.
- SAFRR restructuring in April 2004 has led to the creation of the Agri-Business Development Branch where the Manager, Environmental Programs now deals exclusively with the delivery of environmental programming in Saskatchewan. Program areas include: Green Cover, Beneficial Management Practices, Environmental Farm Plans, Evaluation, Communication and other items such as certification and standards.
- Saskatchewan Environment is working with other departments to improve conservation lands strategies with Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, APAS, SARM and environmental NGO's to ensure that the activities of conservation groups work in harmony with the rural economy.

F – 13 Collaborates with organized labour and industry to review and/or establish the measures necessary to create a positive, competitive and progressive labour environment including a fair, equitable and effective worker's compensation program in Saskatchewan

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan Labour continues to work with business, labour and other stakeholders towards ensuring a safe, fair, productive, equitable, harmonious and family-friendly work environment and workers' compensation system.

- Moreover, in undertaking any new legislative, program, service or review-related initiative, the department embarks on broad-based consultations to responsibly capture and weigh its constituents' positions at the developmental stage.

- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 14 Actively encourages immigrant producers that have experience in growing products which take full advantage of irrigation opportunities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR has increased both the human and financial resources that are working to market the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program in foreign markets. Efforts have been mainly focused in the U.K. and Netherlands because, according to Statistics Canada analysis, new rural immigrants to Canada have traditionally come from western Europe and that is expected to continue. As well, the types of skills required to broaden and deepen the rural economy are found in these two markets (e.g. livestock, irrigation, special crops, value-added and distribution). SAFRR has a strategy in these two markets which includes: targeted advertising in the farm press; presentations at agriculture schools; in-person meetings with farmers; booths at immigration trade shows in both countries; provision of marketing materials as support to Saskatchewan realtors promoting their services; provision of agronomic information; and assistance with planning to incoming farmers visiting Saskatchewan.

- The province is opening the provincial nominee program (SINP) which will do away with specific skill categories and make it easier for immigrants to access employment opportunities in any sector and for rural Saskatchewan employers to recruit immigrant employees.

- The Province is working with business, industry and the agricultural sector to address specific skill shortages and encouraging immigrants with those skills to move to Saskatchewan through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program. This program now includes a new category – Farmer/Owner-Operator that will allow recruitment of foreign farmers having experience in areas such as irrigation.

F – 15 Establishes the Saskatchewan Opportunities Foundation to provide funding of grants, loan guarantees, scholarship and leadership training through public and private funds, private investment/tax credits and revisions to the PST.

- No action taken.

F – 16 Develops and leads an Agri-business Investment Strategy that includes:

- **Developing existing and attracting new agri-business in the province; and**
- **Establishing Business Assistance Teams to assist firms with location analysis, accessing equity and debt financing, navigating the regulatory requirements, determining/negotiating business costs (i.e., utilities, accessing programs and overall problem solving).**

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR created an Agri-Business Development Branch. The new Agri-Business Development Branch will work with communities to define their agri-business development goals and to align their by-laws with their development strategies in order to attract the type of agri-business development they desire. Agri-Business Development Specialists provide service support to communities and business proponents through all stages of project development. This includes providing advice and guidance on financing options and on understanding and achieving regulatory requirements for their business venture. In doing this, SAFRR (the Agri-Business Development Branch) and SIR (Strategic Sector Development Branch) will ensure a close working relationship is maintained.

- SAFRR, SIR and STEP are actively involved in developing investment attraction activities in the province.

F – 17 Works co-operatively at all levels with Aboriginal people (First Nations, Métis and Non-status) to foster a shared understanding of our vision for the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- First Nations and Metis Relations (FNMR) works with Aboriginal people and communities to develop and implement policies and programs that advance shared interests and increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the social and economic life of Saskatchewan. The Province has developed a shared vision for Métis and Off-Reserve First Nations People by integrating action by 12 provincial departments to address education, skills training, work preparation, employment and economic development, and individual and community well-being for Aboriginal people in the province.

The Province proclaimed the Métis Act in January 2002 and signed a MOU with the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan to implement practical initiatives.

F – 18 Engaging the Aboriginal people in the work force that includes expansion of Aboriginal ownership of businesses either from a First Nations' owned business view or in partnership with the private sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan links the Aboriginal labour force with employers and training institutions through the Aboriginal Employment Development Program.
- Through Government support of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, Métis entrepreneurs acquire the management, administrative and marketing skills necessary for business development.
- Saskatchewan worked in partnership with Saskatchewan Council on Community Development to establish a Rural Leadership Development Program that places an increased emphasis on Aboriginal people, with a goal of involving Aboriginal women and youth.
- SIR is looking for opportunities for Aboriginal Partnerships and involvement in its sector strategies and an Aboriginal Procurement Committee established in June, 2004 is intended to help Aboriginal-owned businesses.
- The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nation's Corporate Circle provides focus, planning, training and partnerships to create economic development for First Nations, business and government.

F – 19 Implementing policies that encourage the private and public sector to forge partnerships with Aboriginal organizations.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has many partnerships with Aboriginal people involving the education, justice, social service, economic, environment and health sectors. For example, the school in Meadow Lake is a partnership effort between a First Nation, the school division and federal government for the benefit of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

- The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nation's Corporate Circle provides focus, planning, training and partnerships to create economic development for First Nations, business and government.

- Other partnership examples include the Agreement on Economic Development between the Province and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan, Memorandum of Understandings with First Nations regarding management of natural resources including co-management agreements, partnerships with individual Bands to co-manage schools, and individual partnerships with Indian family and child service agencies to deliver social services.

- Tourism Saskatchewan and the FSIN have signed a protocol agreement that outlines a process of cooperation with regard to the development of First Nations tourism opportunities.

- Industry Canada has provided funding to KCDC from La Ronge as the Regional Management Organization to deliver the First Nations SchoolNet Program in both Saskatchewan and Alberta. This project is positioned within a multi-year strategic plan to provide FN schools with computers, high speed internet access, technical support and ICT training in order to allow FN students to pursue new opportunities for learning and skills development within their own communities.

F – 20 Initiates discussions with the Government of Canada, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan to provide mechanisms for Aboriginal people and their communities to access federal programs and services initiated at the provincial level.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See F-18 and F-19 and F-21.

F – 21 Begins the process of removing barriers to provincial programs and initiatives that prevent First Nations participation.
Government Response/Example(s):

- With input from sector partners, Saskatchewan has implemented a Post-Secondary Sector Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan. This Action Plan is designed to improve Aboriginal people's access to, and success in, post secondary education, training and employment.

- Saskatchewan Health is working to improve the access to provincial health programs/services for Aboriginal

people, as well as increase Aboriginal representation in health system governance and administration. Some examples include:

- Increasing resources to address health concerns in Aboriginal communities, including hiring an Aboriginal Diabetes Consultant.
- Regional Health authorities will work with First Nations communities as they develop their regional plans for the delivery of on-going coordinated education, care and treatment services for the control of diabetes.
- SIAST will be provided with one-time funding to develop a multi-leveled diabetes education program.
- Increasing Aboriginal representation on health governance structures through the board appointment process.
- Established two regional health authorities in the North.
- Train more health providers, offer more return service bursaries, support professional development and a representative workforce.
- Build opportunities for full participation by Aboriginal peoples, and strive to recruit Aboriginal candidates into a wide range of health-related occupations.
- Enhance educational programs available in the North.
- Invest in cultural awareness training to encourage a supportive welcoming workplace environment.

F – 22 Establishes and implements targeted, set aside policies for Aboriginal providers of goods and services.

No Action Taken

F – 23 Promotes careers in the trades in order to provide a greater number of skilled professionals to the various sectors of the economy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskNetWork.ca is a comprehensive provincial web site that helps Saskatchewan residents find information about career, education, training, labour market opportunities and links to other national and international sites.

- The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (ATCC) Board's Mandate is to ensure that apprenticeship training meets industry's labour market needs. This includes promotion and awareness of careers in the trades.

- ATCC field consultants and staff participate in approximately 135 high school career fairs, industry trade shows and public information sessions across Saskatchewan to promote the trades.

- Tourism Saskatchewan works closely with ATCC to promote the trades we have; specifically, the Food & Beverage Person and Guest Services Representative.

- Skills Canada Saskatchewan promotes trades and technology to Saskatchewan youth.

- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 24 Identifies and provides opportunities for businesses to assess and build their entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills in areas of confidence building, entrepreneurial spirit, global vision and knowledge in financing and marketing.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan worked in partnership with SCCD to establish a Rural Leadership Development Program that places an increased emphasis on women, Aboriginal people and youth.

- SIR has promoted world class manufacturing best practices to both rural and urban manufacturers and processors. Efforts by the department have led to the development of 3 consortiums of manufacturing excellence which strive to adopt best practices and improve the competitiveness of their operations.

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 25 Expand distance education through technology so that options for learning can be made available to school children who face extended busing on a daily basis; and so that post secondary students and adults can receive further education or training.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Through Campus Saskatchewan, institutions are working together to give students more flexibility to take courses and to complete the requirements for credentials online. This program provides distance learning opportunities from Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions, delivering courses through alternative methods including the Internet, SCN Interactive Television and off-campus classes. A searchable course catalogue is available online at www.CampusSaskatchewan.ca. Campus Saskatchewan enhances a student's ability to pursue their post-secondary education by bringing the campus to students, no matter where they live.

- Saskatchewan has moved ahead with providing affordable, high speed Internet access through CommunityNet to 366 communities, educational institutions, libraries and health facilities across the province.

- CommunityNet began initial connections to K-12 schools in June 1, 2001 and as of March 2004, 735 schools and division offices have been connected.

F – 26 Utilizes the expertise of local people and the availability of local private sector facilities in the delivery of education programs where such expertise and facilities are not readily available within the education system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has a well-developed regional college system that utilizes the expertise of local people and the local private sector facilities where such expertise and facilities are not readily available within the education system.
- Saskatchewan Learning's Community Schools Program provides additional resources and supports to schools serving significant numbers of vulnerable students and families. In the last few years, the Government has doubled the number of Community Schools. There are now 98 funded Community Schools provincially in urban, rural and northern communities, encompassing elementary and secondary schools.

F – 27 Engages the Department of Education, Department of Economic and Co-operative Development, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan among others, in the

development and implementation of a curriculum component for the primary and secondary system that is dedicated to business/entrepreneurship education.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Entrepreneurship 30 is included under the Practical and Applied Arts (PAA) renewal process. Entrepreneurship 30 is an elective course that may be used as one of the required PAA components. It is typically offered as an elective for Grade 12 students. Entrepreneurship 30 has a strong enrolment with an excess of 1200 students. The renewal of this curriculum was enhanced by cooperation with the University of Regina, Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, as well as through the use of resources from many other provincial and federal agencies.

- The PAA curricula include a focus on ten Transition to Work Dimensions, one of which is entrepreneurship. These dimensions are expected to be addressed in the entire Practical and Applied Arts courses.

- Through the Métis and Off-reserve Strategy, efforts are being taken to ensure business/ entrepreneurship training in cooperation with the FSIN and MNS.

- Government recognizes the importance of entrepreneurs as a driving force in our economy and that First Nation and Métis people are an integral part of that force.

- Although no curriculum has been developed to date targeted specifically at Aboriginal youth entrepreneurs, Government is discussing the importance of business entrepreneurship, education and training with all stakeholders and partners in the educational system and will continue to implement strategies that will enhance partnerships in these areas.

- There are no curriculum components currently available in the primary level.

F – 28 Increases resources available for training people for a career in agriculture and rural businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Although currently not funded, Saskatchewan has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to develop new agricultural

training programs.

- In November 2002, Saskatchewan entered into a two year agreement ($50,000 per year) to support the Veterinary Medical Association's efforts to develop a mentorship program to support the number of rural veterinarians.

- Agriculture 20 is offered as a credit class by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. About 66 Grade 12 students in the province are enrolled.

- In partnership with Saskatchewan Regional Colleges, SIAST and the Universities the Canadian Agriculture Skills Service was launched in late summer 2004 to provide financial and planning support for Saskatchewan farmers and their spouses.

F – 29 Provides funding for comprehensive community-based leadership training to build local capacity to position the community for change (easily accessible and builds on existing modules/programs).

Government Response/Example(s):

- An education and training partnership between government and the municipal sector has been established to develop training programs for administrators and elected officials.

- Saskatchewan provided $90,000 to SCCD to facilitate further development and delivery of a Rural Leadership Development Program that places an increased emphasis on women, Aboriginal people and youth.

- SAFRR formed an Agri-business Development Branch to foster community capacity building.
- In 2004, SIR partnered with the Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association (SEDA) to deliver workshops throughout Saskatchewan on the community capacities needed for *Investment Readiness and Business Attraction*. SIR has previously worked on community capacity development initiatives such as *Project Management for Community Projects*, and *Business Retention and Expansion Initiatives*. Further, SEDA (sponsored by SIR) is delivering basic economic development training modules to SARM and SUMA memberships.

F – 30 Utilizes existing resources to establish a "Venture Management initiative" that would match

experienced managers with new or expanding agri-businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 31 Develops a plan for infrastructure built around key irrigation sites such as, but not limited to, Lake Diefenbaker, the Rafferty and Alameda Reservoirs and the South Saskatchewan River that includes synchronized public and private investment.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The provincial government recognizes the importance of developing a plan around infrastructure, and departments have been engaging in discussions on this issue.
- The province is working with the federal government through the Canada-Saskatchewan Water Supply Expansion Program (CSWEP) to identify the feasibility of irrigation infill and expansion opportunities.
- The federal and provincial governments are working together to initiate the development of a federal/provincial water-based economic development agreement that aligns emerging federal and provincial strategies.
- This remains under active examination by the Infrastructure Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 32 Invests in the infrastructure that is needed to accompany agricultural producers in transition into new sectors which may include:

- **Encouraging development of related sectors along logical corridors;**
- **Providing financial support for water development for livestock operations, incorporating necessary environmental principles of sustainability, health and safety; and**
- **Providing financial assistance through loans or incentives for development of necessary facilities for livestock or specialized crops (vegetables, herbs, organics, berries, etc.) (FIFS, page 17).**

Government Response/Example(s):

See I - 1
See F – 43

F – 33 Develops and implements a strategy that integrates the road, rail and air services in the province to support business development and includes working with municipal governments to improve the co-ordination and integration of planning for permanent municipal road and provincial highway systems.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The most recent Department of Highways and Transportation (DHT) Strategic Plan incorporated an intermodal component.

- Saskatchewan is committed to working collaboratively with Area Transportation Planning Committees in order to address regional planning needs.
- As a result of a review by GR of municipal road issues in the heavy oil producing area of Saskatchewan, in 2003 amendments were made to The Rural Municipality Act, 1989 to provide authority for all rural municipalities to designate primary weights and truck routes for municipal roads. The new authorities provide for harmonization among rural municipalities and with provincial standards, as well as a dispute resolution process when a municipality or municipalities and road users cannot agree to the method of harmonizing weight limits or designated truck routes. The dispute resolution will help to ensure continuity of transportation routes across jurisdictions.

- GR is working with municipal stakeholders to consolidate the rural and urban municipality acts. The consolidated act will propose that both rural and rural municipalities continue to have authority to designate primary weights and transportation routes and a dispute resolution process. It will also propose that urban municipalities be allowed to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.
- GR, SAFRR and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative. SARM is reviewing road haul agreements, permits and transportation routes.

F – 34 Ensures the installation of three-phase power, gas and telephone and lines to rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government will continue to maintain and enhance its 23,000 km of three-phase power lines, 115,000 km of single phase power lines and its 65,000 km of natural gas distribution pipelines for businesses and communities to ensure it can meet load growth across the province as rural areas develop.

- In rural Saskatchewan only 5 communities with more than 200 people do not currently have natural gas service. Each of those communities has been offered service in the past and declined. 93% of all residences have, or have access to, natural gas service.

F – 35 Provides access to high-speed phone lines and cellular coverage in order to keep pace with new technology.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Sask Tel has invested $24 million to increase digital cell phone coverage to additional Saskatchewan communities. By 2003, digital cellular service was available to more than 90 per cent of Saskatchewan's population, serving more than 270,000 square km.

- In March 2002, SaskTel announced the expansion of its High Speed Internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years under the province's CommunityNet high speed internet initiative.

- In June 2004, the second phase of CommunityNet was launched. An additional 71 communities are being added to the network. As well, most farmsteads and businesses within 30 kilometres of many existing CommunityNet centres will be able to access SaskTel's commercial high-speed network.

- The Federal Government has made available $7.5 million from BRAND (Broadband for Rural and Northern Development), $2 million from the Northern Development Accord and $525,000 from the federal/provincial Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) over the past 2 years to fund Broadband (high speed internet) in Saskatchewan. The majority of benefactors live in rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. They also provide $5 million for the first phase of CommunityNet and an additional $2.25 million to connect all the libraries to high speed internet.

F – 36 Adopts an aggressive policy towards irrigation development that expands utilization of the current irrigation system and further development in order to open new areas for diversified agricultural growth.
Government Response/Example(s):

- Changes to *The Irrigation Act* are being completed, which will allow irrigation districts to use alternative means to expand infrastructure.

- See F – 31 for further examples.

F – 37 Develops options that ensure a practical and economically feasible water treatment, distribution and wastewater management infrastructure in the province.

Government Response/Examples(s):

- Government's Safe Drinking Water Strategy includes: better regulations, protection of source waters, and improved water treatment infrastructure.

- SaskWater was restructured and received a new mandate as a direct result of the province's Safe Water Strategy in 2002. The new SaskWater is a commercial Crown corporation that provides water and wastewater solutions to Sasktachewan communities, industries, individuals and businesses. SaskWater designs, builds and operates water treatment plants and wastewater treatment facilities. In addition, the corporation now operates and maintains community-owned systems under contract and partners with communities and the private sector to design and build regional water supply systems (i.e., pipelines).

- Saskatchewan Health is involved in the following initiatives:
  - Saskatchewan Health is working with regional health authorities to develop a database that will capture information (such as location, owner/operator, source type, treatments & test information) related to public water supplies regulated under Saskatchewan Health's *Health Hazard Regulations*.
  - Saskatchewan Health is working to develop a provincial water-borne disease investigation protocol.

F – 38 Establishes the legislative, regulatory and policy framework that is consistent and fair and that encourages the sustainable non-traditional and, where possible, multi-use of Crown lands for the benefit of rural residents and that leases issued contain clauses allowing for integrated multiple uses by the lease owner.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR has consulted with the Crown Lands Stakeholders' Forum, a group of individuals representing clients and Saskatchewan residents having an interest in agricultural Crown land use.

- ACRE Crown Land Subcommittee is examining this issue.

F – 39 In conjunction with local governments, develops a land use planning process that takes a balanced approach to land management in the province and establishes fair and consistent rules with respect to land use for the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- As part of phase 2 of the renewal of the planning legislation, GR is reviewing *The Planning and Development Act, 1983* to enhance local capacity, achieve consistency in land use planning and balance local, regional and provincial interests. Greater opportunities for inter-municipal and regional approaches to planning will be established in the legislation to achieve greater consistency in land use and local planning and to support provincial interests.

- GR is providing advisory support to SARM on matters supporting consistent zoning rules for intensive livestock operations and is a participant in advising the Great Sand Hills Planning District, which is a model for inter-municipal planning.

- GR, SAFRR and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative. SARM is reviewing municipal planning issues.

F – 40 Creates a Rural Opportunities Office to develop and implement a long term, comprehensive, action plan for rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Rural Revitalization Office was created. The Office was transferred to SAFRR and has been renamed the Rural Issues Office.

- The government produced a provincial rural strategy titled "A Strategy for Rural Saskatchewan: Responding to ACRE" in 2002.

The government created an Interdepartmental Working Group and Steering Committee, chaired respectively by the Director of Rural Issues Office and the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for rural revitalization, to coordinate the

delivery of the Rural Strategy across government.

F – 41 Encourages and enables the emergence of "Opportunity Regions" from the grassroots in rural Saskatchewan to alleviate the multiplicity of regional boundaries and to foster community and economic development.

- ***As part of this process*, it is recommended that the province establish a voluntary program that encourages municipalities in a region to co-operate in a Reeves-mayor's council similar to that initiated under the Regional Parks Program. For example, under this program, the council could qualify for assistance (financial and technical) to establish a co-ordinating office and co-ordinating opportunities fund.**
- **It is also recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan along with the Government of Canada examine the concept of developing co-terminus boundaries as a means to create a more conducive and comprehensive environment for their service delivery and rural community and economic development.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- GR, SAFRR and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative. SARM's discussions have included comments on regional issues.
- GR and municipal stakeholders are currently working on consolidating the urban and rural municipal acts into one act. This will help to enable better community cooperation by removing any legislative impediments between the two acts and establish a standard set of principles and procedures common to all municipalities in the province.
- ACRE Infrastructure Subcommittee is considering issues related to a regional approach to provision of infrastructure.

F – 42 Conducts a review of the programs implemented in Ireland to assist in the development of business start-ups to determine the applicability of the programs to rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- From examining reports on economic development processes in Ireland, government found that substantial differences exist between the two jurisdictions (i.e. Ireland and Saskatchewan). Population and the fact that Ireland is a member nation of the EU are key differences.

As well, other factors for success include currency depreciation, EU subsidies, market access to the EU, foreign direct investment, tax reductions, regulatory reform, a more uniformly skilled and educated work force, and "social pacts" between industry, labour and government aimed, among other things, at providing stable labour-management relations.

F – 43 Moves forward on the development of a feeding industry to complement the grains and oilseeds sector by ensuring that financing, regulatory impediments, environmental sensitivity and leadership are addressed.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See I-1.
- BSE Recovery Programs:
  - The Saskatchewan government responded to the BSE crisis by offer a number of programs to help Saskatchewan beef and other ruminant producers cope with the challenges presented by the US border closure.
  - In 2003, Saskatchewan delivered the Slaughter Element and Packer Incentive Element of the federal-provincial BSE Recovery Program.
  - In addition, the province also delivered several provincial only programs including the Saskatchewan Fed Livestock Competitive Market Adjustment Program, the Saskatchewan Set-Aside Program and the Saskatchewan Cull Animal Program.
  - Saskatchewan also assisted the federal government by delivering the Federal Cull Animal Program in Saskatchewan.

- Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation offers a Forage Rainfall Program for native forage and tame grazing acres. This program has provided coverage on an average of 2.5 million acres over the last three years and 7.9M in indemnities has been paid to customers over this same time period.

- Under APF, the environmental chapter will address best management practices. Federal – Provincial governments have been working together to develop beneficial management practises (BMP). The target date for access to funding of BMPs is the end of fiscal year 04/05.

F – 44 Expands efforts to facilitate increased forage production.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Conservation Cover Program provided financial incentives for farmers to convert marginal cropland into forage. Over a three year period (2001, 2002 and 2003), the program contributed over $14 million to assist in the conversion of 1.3 million acres to perennial cover. The Conservation Cover Program ended in 2003-04.
- The federal Green Cover Program is now in place.
- The government provides applied research funding to the Western Beef Development Centre (WBDC).
- Through ADF, government invests money in forage research.
- Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation offers a Forage Rainfall Program for native forage and tame grazing acres.

F – 45 Ensures a broad based organic strategy is developed.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government provided $500,000 to assist the growth of Saskatchewan's organic food production and processing industry. This funding assists in developing certification systems and marketing programs to assist Saskatchewan's organic industry.
- The government helps support a satellite office in Saskatoon of the Prairie Regional Office for the Canadian Organic Centre for Excellence.

F – 46 Assists in the industry-driven establishment and implementation of a national accreditation system for the organic sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See F – 45.

F – 47 Utilizes agricultural Crown land as a tool to enhance the livestock industry

- **Encouraging the conversion of marginal cultivated agricultural Crown land to perennial forage;**
- **Examining the development of an infrastructure program that would provide Crown land tenants the means to construct required facilities on lands being converted to perennial forage; and**
- **Change current Crown land use policy to maximize potential whether through sales or lease.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- On Crown land, Saskatchewan is consulting with the Crown Lands Stakeholder's Forum, a group of individuals representing clients and Saskatchewan residents having an interest in agricultural Crown land use. This recommendation remains under consideration and examination.

- This remains under active examination by the Crown Land Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 48 Expands Livestock Loan Guarantee Program (bison females, feedlot program, expanded dollars in existing program).

Government Response/Example(s):

- The loan guarantee limit has now been increased to $70 million from $65 million in 2003-04 and from $60 million in 2002-03.

- Given the uncertainty created by the BSE crisis, female bison have not been added as an eligible commodity under the Livestock Loan Guarantee Program. This issue will be revisited once the industry stabilizes or the border reopens to live bison exports

- See Response I - 1.

F – 49 Develops a central registry of available service providers and producers' demand for services to facilitate a more effective use of agriculture resources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Currently, there are a number of different public and private internet websites and service providers that provide this information and service (e.g. Feed and forage listing service at SAFRR website, SCCD).

- Government has taken no additional action.

F – 50 Examines available options for assisting producers such as loan guarantees in other areas, interest subsidies or tax incentives for those in transition to sustainable production systems.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See I-1.
- See F - 43 for BSE Recovery Programs.
- The Federal-Provincial-Territorial, Agricultural Policy Framework Renewal Program was launched in Saskatchewan on October 1, 2004. This program includes new programming to support effective business planning and to improve access to skills development and learning which contribute to the development of successful business ventures and increased income for farm families in rural Saskatchewan.

F – 51 Provides linkages between producers and technical expertise on market information, market access and development issues.

Government Response/Example(s)

- The Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) program conducts producer-driven research and development projects in rural Saskatchewan near eight communities – Canora, Redvers, Indian Head, Melfort, Scott, Prince Albert, Swift Current and Rosthern.
- SAFRR set-up the Agriculture Knowledge Centre (AKC) in Moose Jaw as the first point of inquiry for both technical and general agriculture inquiries. The AKC is staffed by 14 people including four resource agents, eight specialists, an office administrator and a manager. Specialist positions provide top end expertise related to crops, livestock, forages and business management. The AKC can be accessed by toll-free telephone, fax or e-mail.
- SAFRR has established nine Agriculture Business Centres (ABCs) throughout the province to meet regional agriculture development needs. These offices are located at: Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Regina, Swift Current, Outlook, North Battleford, Tisdale and Weyburn.

In each of these centres, a team of specialists (agri-business development, livestock, crops and forages) are available to help individuals and communities build on opportunities for agriculturally based economic development. They focus on providing leadership and expertise to agri-entrepreneurs and communities in the areas of applying new technology to operations, business development processes, and capacity building. This is done through building partnerships with people and agencies in order to help clients expand, change or start an agriculture-related business.

F – 52 Explores the concept of "business clusters" for the rural manufacturing and construction sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Cluster initiatives are progressing well in several parts of Saskatchewan. Examples of successful initiatives include the Swift Current and Moose Jaw Regions. Capacity Exchange pilot program in Humboldt is another example of how manufacturers from a regional cluster in rural Saskatchewan share their excess capacity.

- The ACRE Infrastructure Subcommittee, as part of its mandate, is examining the opportunities for economic clusters in Saskatchewan.

F – 53 Promotes the rural manufacturing and construction sector to the people of Saskatchewan explaining about its contribution to the community.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan recognizes that more work needs to be done on promoting rural manufacturing and construction.

F – 54 Enhances the province's emergency services to provide rural residents with effective emergency services and speedy access that will ensure delivery of primary health care facilities and services on a co-ordinate, integrated and multi-disciplinary team basis.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care identified a number of priority initiatives towards the integration of primary health care services. Since the Action Plan was released, significant work related to the

development of primary health care in Saskatchewan has been undertaken, including:

- Developing primary health care teams and integrated services linked by networks throughout the province. There are now currently 25 primary health care sites across the province. Work continues on development of standards for primary health care networks in the areas of access and program requirements.
- Regional health authorities have enhanced capacity to develop and support primary health care teams.
- Continued work with the Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) to develop model contracts for family physicians working in a primary care setting.
- As part of the 2003 national Health Accord, Saskatchewan has committed to ensuring that at least 50% of its population will have access to an appropriate health care provider, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as soon as possible (within eight years at the latest.)
- Saskatchewan people have access to a 24-hour telephone advice line for immediate and reliable health advice. Healthline is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week health advice and information telephone line that was launched in August, 2003. It is an innovative, efficient way to ensure that residents across the province have immediate access to health advice. For its first eight months of operation, over 40,000 health related questions were answered from every health region in the province.

- The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care also outlined a number of key actions that will enhance the province's emergency services to provide rural residents with effective emergency services including:
  - providing more training to EMS providers;
  - improving response times, particularly in isolated areas;
  - improving dispatch of ambulance services.

F – 55 Invests significantly in research aimed at reducing fuel consumption and development of alternative fuel sources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan's Greenprint on Ethanol Production will stimulate investment in ethanol fuel and byproducts that in turn will support increased livestock development.

- Saskatchewan has become the first province in Canada to establish the legal framework to allow for mandating an ethanol blend in gasoline sold in the province.

- Saskatchewan has established an Office of Energy Conservation.
- SAFRR has provided technical support to Milligan Bio-Tech in Foam Lake for bio-diesel development.
- SaskPower, through its Green Power Portfolio, is pursuing wind and environmentally preferred power supplies. In 2003/04 Sask Power provided $10.2 million for expansion of the Cypress wind facility.
- SaskEnergy has partnered with SaskPower to demonstrate flaregas conservation and conversion to electricity using microturbines and to demonstrate distributed generation opportunities for institutional applications
- SaskEnergy is currently conducting research into the conversion of forest and agricultural residues into synthetic natural gas.
- SaskEnergy began offering prime rate loans, in July 2001 through the SaskEnergy Network to encourage customers to use more energy efficient natural gas appliances. With Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) participation beginning in December 2002, the focus of the program became ENERGY STAR qualified furnaces and boilers. Between the Prime Rate Loan Program and the ENERGY STAR Loan Event which ran September 8, 2003 – March 31, 2004, SaskEnergy has assisted approximately 9,000 customers with $33.5 million in approved loans for higher efficient natural gas equipment. The ENERGY STAR Loan Event is running again from September 1, 2004 – March 31, 2005.
- SaskEnergy also offers an online Home Energy Audit, and sponsors the EnerGuide for Houses program both of which are focused on helping consumers conserve energy and use energy more efficiently.

F – 56 In conjunction with all provincial associations/organizations and media, develops and commits to an action plan that builds positive attitudes and promotes the attributes of rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has more than 12,000 non-profit organizations and 5,000 incorporated charities all drive by a vibrant volunteer community. The positive attitudes that volunteers bring to their tasks enriches the lives of rural Saskatchewan residents. The Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative was established in 2002. It works to strengthen the relationship between government and Saskatchewan's voluntary sector to assist volunteer organizations in effectively fulfilling their mandates.

- Saskatchewan is currently organizing the Premier's Economic Summit for early in 2005.
- The Saskatchewan Dream
- Growing the Future
- Saskatchewan's *The Future is Wide Open* campaign
- Ongoing sponsorship of Rotary's *Your Future is Here* campaign aimed at encouraging Saskatchewan young people to make their career in Saskatchewan.
- Marketing campaign to promote the young entrepreneur component of the SBLA program in rural Saskatchewan was launched in October 2004.
- While many initiatives have been undertaken, a co-ordinated strategy still needs to be developed.

F – 57 Invests a maximum amount of available government dollars into publicly accessible applied research and development that will provide the greatest benefits in opportunity areas, education and technology transfer for the industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan funds approximately $120 million in research and development initiatives on an annual basis. This funding is made available to the University of Saskatchewan, federal institutions, industry and research institutions such as the Prairie Swine Centre, PAMI, Western Beef Development Centre and VIDO to carry out research activities that address food and non-food processing, value added, the livestock and crop sectors and the organic industry.
- The Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) program conducts producer-driven research.
- The Saskatchewan Forestry Centre
- The Saskatchewan Petroleum Technology Research Centre

- The Saskatchewan Petroleum Research Incentive

- The International Test Centre for Carbon Dioxide Capture and the Canadian Clean Power Coalition.

- In its deliberations of funding, SIR considers projects that address a large number of priority sectors of the province. Support for research and innovation are two major considerations.
- Protein, Oilseeds and Starch (POS) Pilot Plant at the University of Saskatchewan

- The Food Centre at the University of Saskatchewan

- The Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health (I.ARE.H)

- The Saskatchewan Market Assessment of Research and Technology Program (SMART) received funding of $150,000 to support market research projects in fiscal year 2003/2004. This funding was made up of equal contributions from NRC-IRAP and SIR. The goals of the program are threefold:
    - Enable small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to acquire market planning, research, or development assistance beyond their in-house capability.
    - Expose SMEs to the skills available in the consulting community and help foster relationships between individual companies and consultants.
    - Allow the local consulting community to display their capabilities to local SMEs.

F – 58 Invests in research in farming practices that help farmers better utilize land and energy resources (e.g., integration of livestock and field crop production to reduce reliance on synthetic fertilizers).

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR provides $12 million in agriculture research and development initiatives annually. IR contributes to infrastructure to support research and development.

- The Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) program receives funding from SAFRR and the Saskatchewan Forestry Centre.

- The Saskatchewan Forestry Centre

- Under the APF, the environment chapter provides for Environmental Farm Plans. Saskatchewan is hosting Environmental Farm Plans workshops scheduled for November / December 2004 to assist producers in completing EFPs. SAFRR employees provide technical expertise to producers

Industry Advisory Group of leading edge producers has been established to provide advice regarding implementation of EFPs.

S – 1 The Government should work with private sector partners to develop increased meat processing in the Province. These efforts would include assessing impediments that restrict meat plants from gaining an inspection status that would enhance market access opportunities (currently only federally inspected plants can ship out of the province).

Government Response/Example(s):

- In 2003, SAFRR instituted a grant program to provincially inspected plants equal to two years worth of inspection charges if they converted their plants to federal inspection status. Maximum grant available is $50,000/yr.

- SAFRR has instituted a pilot project using cameras and computer technology as a possible mechanism to provide some government oversight in health inspected plants. It is hoped these measures will be a cost effective method to enhance public confidence in the health licensed system.

- Development continues on a provincial meat processing strategy.

- Saskatchewan food processors are expected to be able to access funding for development of HACCP programs through the Food Safety Training program administered through the Food Safety and Regulations Branch of SAFRR. Implementing HACCP is a major hurtle for plants considering money to federal inspection.

- Saskatchewan is taking a lead role in developing equivalency protocols to allow provincially inspected food processors to distribute products inter-provincially.

- SAFRR is providing support to a proposal by Saskatchewan meat processors to elevate meat cutting to the status of an indentured trade course in collaboration with the Department of Learning.

- Consultations are taking place with the Saskatchewan Meat Processors Association regarding future directions for the Saskatchewan industry. These discussions will focus on options primarily related to health licensed plants.

S – 2 With a finite amount of taxpayer dollars, the importance of a properly functioning, affordable and effective support structure is critical. Governments must more efficiently target and cap programs and payments and assist producers in transition to production systems that are much less reliant on government support. Farm support priorities must focus on helping producers adjust their operations and management skills so they can move effectively into long-term, sustainable sectors. Governments must be prepared to maintain strong social institutions, an effective regulatory system, labour legislation, and a just taxation system, to balance the increasing concentration of corporate power in today's global economy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- On December 22, 2003, Saskatchewan signed the Agricultural Policy Framework Implementation Agreement, making available the two national safety net programs (the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program and Production Insurance – otherwise known as Crop Insurance) for Saskatchewan producers.

  The CAIS program is a whole-farm margin based program which seeks to provide support to producers that is commensurate with each farm's productivity and profitability history. The CAIS program is federally administered by the Farm Income Programs Directorate in Winnipeg. Crop Insurance is also an important risk management tool for Saskatchewan farmers. Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) administers the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Program. SCIC reviews the crop insurance programs annually in an effort to ensure the program provides effective and efficient production insurance products.

S – 3 Adequate short-term assistance is still required for stabilization and disaster programming during the transition period. In order to make the most effective use of this funding government must adjust current programs to better target need including improved disaster protection. The provincial Farm Support Review Committee and the National Safety Net Review process must be directed to find meaningful changes to the package of farm support programs [crop insurance, the Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) program, and the Canadian Farm Income Program (CFIP)] including improving existing programs, the possible elimination of programs or portions of programs, and the introduction of new programs. It is essential that governments and the general public recognize that producers are not seeking income assurance but rather, adequate protection against disasters.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S – 2.

S – 4 Any government support programs, long or short-term, must be designed to be accessible to all producers, including First Nations farmers.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Although accessibility of First Nations producers to safety net programs technically exists, practical ability to access these programs still needs to be reviewed.

S – 5 A mandatory producer levy should be considered. The funds raised should not be commodity specific and a producer driven process be developed and implemented that identifies emerging sectors or market opportunities for existing and new crops for both food and non food uses, and results in public partnership of intellectual partnership.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A number of livestock and crop groups are currently participating in commodity specific check-off programs for both refundable and non-refundable levies. A number of other groups are exploring the possibilities of implementing similar producer levy programs for their sectors.
- Government will not proceed with a mandatory producer levy without general support of affected producers.

S – 6 The provincial government develops and implements a strategy that identifies high value crop opportunities, effective and competitive production technologies for new and existing crops and the appropriate skills and knowledge required for success.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR's Agriculture Manufacturing Strategy identifies sector specific strategies.

S – 7 The development of any environmental farm plans be developed in consultation with Saskatchewan producers and producer groups and that the programs reflect the conditions and environmental priorities of Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Environmental farm planning constitutes the major component of the Environment Chapter of the Federal /Provincial Agriculture Policy Framework. It is the stated objective of the Federal Minister of Agriculture that all Canadian farms will eventually have environmental farm plans. Consultations with producer groups have occurred.

- A Saskatchewan Agri-Environmental Advisory Council consisting of 15 leading producers has been created to provide advice on agri-environmental issues to the Canada Saskatchewan Implementation Management Committee and the Federal/Provincial Environmental Working Group under the Environment Chapter of APF. The Provincial Council of Agricultural Diversification and Development Boards (PCAB) has been contracted to deliver Environmental Farm Plans in Saskatchewan, with on-farm delivery expected to begin 2005.

S – 8 The provincial government pressure the federal government to develop and implement a strategy, including compensation, to mitigate the impact of trade distorting subsidies on the profitability of the grains and oilseeds sector and related industries.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan efforts to pursue trade injury compensation are vigorous and ongoing.

S – 9 That in cases of grain dealer/processor bankruptcy the Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the importance of producers receiving payment for product delivered and therefore urge the Canadian Grain Commissioner to pursue options that provide protection to producers.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Provincial Government agrees producers should be fully compensated when a grain merchandiser licensed by the CGC defaults on cash purchase receipts, elevator receipts or grain receipts recognized under

the *Canada Grain Act*.

- Saskatchewan also believes the CGC needs to be more vigilant in the policing of unlicensed operations that are engaged in the purchase and resale of grain.

- SAFRR has raised the issues with the CGC.

S – 10 The provincial government encourage the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) to continue to have a free and open discussion with producers and industry to facilitate the development of the tools and policies necessary for a profitable value added sector for both producers and industry.
Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government believes that the CWB is doing a good job in promoting value-added activities. The promotion of activity must be on-going, with the agency continuing to seek out new ways to facilitate increased processing of grains in Saskatchewan.

- Specific activities include:
  - The issue is re-affirmed in meetings between officials of SAFRR and the CWB.
  - Meetings between the provincial Minister of Agriculture Food and directors of the Canadian Wheat Board occur at least annually. Action taken by the CWB to facilitate value-added activity is a regular agenda item.

S – 11 The provincial government acknowledge the concerns that some wheat customers have expressed in relation to foods and food ingredients that are the result of modern biotechnology and that a market focus is critical to the success of farmers.

- This position is essentially identical to that of the province. The Minister of Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food has conveyed this position to Agriculture and Agri-food Canada.

S – 12 The provincial government not support the introduction of genetically modified (GM) wheat until market acceptance issues are addressed and technologies capable of identifying and segregating grains are in place.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan endorses this recommendation.

S – 13 The provincial government lead an effort that results in producer groups, industry and other provincial governments coming together in a common effort to impress upon the federal government their responsibility for any trade injury compensation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan efforts to pursue trade injury compensation are vigorous and ongoing.

S – 14 The provincial government pressure the federal government to negotiate a World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement that requires penalties for parties involved in trade harassment policies and practices.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government of Saskatchewan has repeatedly called upon the Federal Government to increase trade access to Saskatchewan producers.

- Saskatchewan continues to press the federal government to seek changes at the WTO level to the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures that would clarify the existing rules and make them less prone to manipulation citing the inappropriate use of countervail and antidumping in agriculture as an example. Saskatchewan also continues to highlight the negative impact of these measures in discussions with the federal government on concerns arising from NAFTA.

S – 15 The Government of Saskatchewan use its influence with the federal government to ensure that the Canadian Grain Commission review panel report and recommendations are made in a timely fashion.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The reports on the internal and external reviews which were undertaken on the CGC were submitted to then Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Lyle Vanclief during the 2002-03 fiscal year. On July 2, 2002 Minister Serby wrote Minister Vanclief in respect to both the internal and external reviews that were underway

at that time. In this correspondence Saskatchewan expressed concern with the process of the review and recommended to the Government of Canada that they proceed carefully with any changes to the scope and mandate of the CGC. The federal government was also encouraged to provide producers with ample information and time to provide their input to the review process.

- SAFRR met with the Review Panel that had been commissioned to perform the external review. As of late summer, 2004 there has been no follow-up action by the federal government on these reports, nor have they been publicly released.

S – 16 One of the problems identified for the development of farm-based tourism is high insurance premiums. A useful move would be to pull the insurance industry together and give them an opportunity to respond, and failing satisfactory results, examine alternative ways of group insurance.

Government Response/Example(s):

- High insurance premiums have been identified as a barrier for small rural and northern tourism operators particularly those that are attempting to add value to their tourism product experience (eg. horseback riding, snowmobiling, water-based activities). The Saskatchewan Country Vacation Association has identified the need to address this issue from time to time but to date have not brokered any special group insurance plan. The Saskatchewan Outfitters Association has developed an ongoing relationship with Reiben Insurance out of Creighton which specializes in serving the needs of their sector.

- At the national level, the Canadian Tourism Commission has also been addressing this issue recently. They completed a cross-country operator survey in 2002 which resulted in a database which profiles insurance providers for adventure and ecotourism operators which is posted on their website. Another useful reference tool available on the CTC website is the "Risk Management and Insurance Guide" (2001).

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 17 Specific opportunities in agri-tourism, eco-tourism and aboriginal tourism must be identified and qualified; involving potential private sector and public sector partners, and First and Metis Nations in both the process and any subsequent development are potential private sector and public sector partners, and First Nations and Metis.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Tourism Saskatchewan will continue to work with industry to identify the specific development resources required to further the rural tourism initiative.

- Vertical tourism development strategies were prepared for ecotourism (Jan. 1996), agritourism (April 1998), and Aboriginal tourism (March 1996). Further to this, tourism development strategies for the Métis were also prepared covering three general regions (2000).Tourism Saskatchewan, with input from industry, plans to undertake reassessments of each of these vertical sectors with the objective of revising and refining the related strategies to ensure that they reflect current industry challenges and opportunities. Each of these sectors does provide opportunity for the growth of businesses in rural Saskatchewan.

- With the reassessment of these strategies within the broader opportunities linked to rural tourism and the development of tourism destination areas, Tourism Saskatchewan will continue to work with industry to identify the specific development resources required to further the rural tourism initiative. While accelerating the growth of rural tourism is largely a function of program and private investment, Tourism Saskatchewan has identified this area as one of its' top-line opportunities and, as such, will direct substantial effort towards achieving growth in this area.

- Tourism Saskatchewan will also be priorizing cultural tourism as a top-line opportunity as this area has considerable tourism potential as well. A different type of strategic priority setting will take place in this case as there is no base strategy to be used as a template.

- The current fiscal year will see action plans associated with these assessments discussed with stakeholders. Availability of resources required to implement the strategies and action plans will determine progress in each of the areas.

S – 18 Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization develop and lead an Agri-business Investment Strategy. This strategy would identify an investment team that actively co-ordinates and pursues attracting entrepreneurs, agri-business, partners and capital into targeted sectors.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR and SAFRR have developed a shared agri-value manufacturing strategy and work continues across

government to co-ordinate investment activities.
S – 19 Given that the opportunities in this province far outweigh the capacity of our internal capital resources, the attraction of outside investment will assist in stimulating growth and economic development within the agriculture sector. In an effort to put our industry on a more level playing field with neighboring provinces when it comes to attracting outside investment into the industry, the province should consider changes to the Farm Ownership Provisions under the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act. **Government Response/Example(s):** • The Province has passed legislation that removes farm ownership restrictions on individuals and companies from other provinces. Formerly there were ownership restrictions of the acreage for those from outside the province. This change was made to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act* to promote investment in Saskatchewan's rural areas.
S – 20 The provincial government should remove the residency requirements under the Farm Land Security Act for all individuals who are Canadian citizens. **Government Response/Example(s):** • The Province has passed legislation that removes farm ownership residency restrictions on individuals and companies from other provinces.
S – 21 The provincial government should examine lifting the ownership restrictions under the Farm Land Security Act for specific development corridors or value-adding agricultural industries that are known to have significant local economic impact and are currently generally approved under existing *exemption provisions (horticulture,* livestock, etc.). The objective is to encourage outside investment in Saskatchewan into areas that will stimulate growth within the province. **Government Response/Example(s):** • The Province has passed legislation that removes farm ownership residency restrictions on individuals and companies from other provinces. This change was made to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act* to promote investment in Saskatchewan's rural areas.

- There is allowance in legislation for case by case examination of projects that may not meet the provisions of *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act*.

S – 22 That the Government of Saskatchewan form a Task Force to study the feasibility of establishing a foundation similar to Ontario's Trillium Foundation that would support rural community economic development initiatives.

Government Response/Example(s):

- This has been reviewed. Ontario's Trillium Foundation is driven by lottery revenues but its focus is on community development and social and cultural issues.

- Saskatchewan addresses similar intents through the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation work with non-government organizations at the community level. SIR is involved in community economic development through its services for provincial business and co-operative development through the Federal/Provincial Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre and its 16 Regionalization sites. The branch also partners with the province's 28 Regional Economic Development Authorities (REDAs) to support business and community economic development through the development of "how to" business resources and training initiatives, and co-locations in regional One Stop Business Enterprise Centres to support and encourage business development in those regions.

S – 23 That the Government of Saskatchewan dedicate a pool of financial resources to create a venture capital fund that can be accessed by professional financial management firms to leverage private capital.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See I-1

S – 24 Saskatchewan must establish and maintain a complete, accurate and current ecological and geological information database (including water) and increase its availability to industry. This would assist Saskatchewan business to compete with other jurisdictions for limited exploration and development dollars.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Since 2001-02, additional funding has been provided to SIR for enhanced geological research and mapping to aid petroleum and mineral exploration in the province. The amount of Saskatchewan geoscience data that can be accessed electronically by industry continues to increase. SIR continues to implement improvements in electronic service delivery.

- PFRA, working with other provincial departments, is developing a national data base on soil and water.

- Additional work needs to be done as resources become available.

S – 25 That the economic development and/or delivery opportunities presented by CommunityNet be taken into consideration in determining the most effective provision of health care services in rural and remote Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Telehealth Saskatchewan currently allows patients and physicians in rural and remote areas to have consultations through an interactive video link with specialists in larger centres.

S – 26 That the economic development and/or delivery opportunities presented by Community Net be taken into consideration in determining the most effective provision of educational services in rural and remote Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Through SCN, Saskatchewan is providing remote learning opportunities to rural citizens in several different ways, including:
    - Providing CommunityNet through a digital satellite network to the approximately 150 schools and communities not reached by SaskTel's CommunityNet service;
    - Providing approximately 2,500 hours/year of school credit programming through the e-learning television network. Fifty-six different classes are currently being taught through this medium. About 3,000 students are registered each year, the majority rural.
    - Providing remote learning opportunities through the SCN special events network on a fee-for-service

basis.

S – 27 Develop a fully integrated, comprehensive, multi-discipline single source database of information available to municipalities, economic development organizations, businesses, professionals and others including detailed information on soil, water supply, transportation infrastructure, incentives, local government structure, land ownership and taxation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The SaskBiz website offers some of this right now (http://www.saskbiz.ca), whereby community developers, investors and site selectors are able to review a variety of information needs of use to developers and business planning professionals. The site does not provide comparisons of local tax rates, soil types, land use restrictions, land ownership details or available incentives (financial resources would need to be made available to add these). The SaskBiz website can be supplemented by other directories, publications and government sources of data/expertise when and as required. At a federal level, discussion on information data base is ongoing.

S – 28 That the provincial government approval processes for zoning, planning and development, water and sewage, and other approvals be reviewed and streamlined to be more efficient and to meet the needs of proponents. It is recognized that that this could ultimately require further resources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Enhancements will be made to the planning legislation and regulations to add improved tools and mechanisms for the subdivision review process to meet emerging provincial and municipal needs, such as:
  - establishing statements of provincial interests that will provide a clearer framework for community planning throughout the province;
  - amending *The Subdivision Regulations* to provide for electronic application and electronic plan submissions and simplify technical requirements;
  - amending *The Planning and Development Act, 1983* to remove provincial approvals for bylaws and reduce provincial requirements for planning approvals, where possible, that will reduce review time lines and expedite development.
  - The New Cities Act has provisions for streamlined planning and approval processes. The new consolidated municipal act will have similar provisions.

S – 29 Better integration of agriculture, economics, and rural development programs and services should be pursued with municipalities, REDAs, Community Futures projects, and provincial departments to eliminate duplications, create efficiencies, linkages, and synergies and create one-stop shopping.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The agencies and organizations identified in the recommendation have been working with their respective regional partners to accomplish this objective. These organizations see merit in voluntarily collaborating on issues of mutual interest.
- The new Agri-Business Development Branch is committed to working collaboratively with the other parties.
- SARM's "Clearing the Path" initiative.
- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 30 The first priority must be an effective primary health care strategy and system that is proactive, understood, and supported by funding. Only when this is in place can an effective governance model be developed with clear definitions and understandings of roles, authority, accountability and autonomy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government is promoting the development of primary health care teams, which build on existing Regional Health Authority (RHA) programs and services, emphasize a co-ordinated team approach to service delivery, and support stronger linkages among health care providers.
- A document entitled *Guidelines for the Development of a Regional Health Authority Plan for Primary Health Care Services* has been developed.
- See F-54 for additional primary healthcare development information.

S – 31 Health and Emergency Services: Factors that need to be considered:

- **Industry development;**
- **Business growth and expansion;**

- **Commuting population traffic volumes and transportation of dangerous goods;**
- **Location of closest primary and acute facilities, health centers, and ambulatory services; and,**
- **Changing demographics.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan Health works closely with Regional Health Authorities and other partners in the health sector, to assess local needs in rural and northern Saskatchewan. These needs are then balanced with broader quality/volume issues to ensure that the most effective and sustainable types of services are provided.

- *The Action Plan on Saskatchewan Health Care* established a new joint planning relationship between RHAs and Saskatchewan Health, one that is linked to the overall government budget and planning processes. A key component of the new planning and accountability regime was the establishment of integrated planning forums including the Minister's Forum (Board Chairs and Minister) and the Leadership Council (CEOs and Deputy Minister).

- Part of the planning cycle includes the preparation of a regional environmental scan. An environmental scan helps identify the key regional opportunities and challenges, and serves as a foundation for the RHA operational plan including identifying health and emergency services to be provided by RHAs. In the scan, RHAs are expected to consider the following broad categories:
  - regional demographics and epidemiology;
  - health status of residents;
  - community/client/key stakeholder expectations;
  - regional economic trends;
  - human resources; and,
  - service volumes.

S – 32 The Saskatchewan Government will stop the erosion of services and ensure that essential health and emergency services are available in rural communities to sustain and enable development. People need to know what health services they are assured of receiving within their rural communities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In addition to primary health care development, the following are examples of Saskatchewan Health

strategies to help ensure quality health care services for residents of rural Saskatchewan:

- The *Senior Citizens Ambulance Assistance Program* (SCAAP) and the Air Ambulance Program, limits the cost of road ambulance services within Saskatchewan to $250 per trip for seniors 65 years of age and older. Air ambulance clients, with the exception of those living in northern Saskatchewan, pay a fixed amount of $350 per trip. Rural and northern residents receive the most benefit from these programs because of the distances traveled.
- Implementation of a three-year training initiative to bring emergency medical service providers up to emergency medical technician (EMT)-basic level. This training initiative is targeted to emergency medical providers in rural and northern ambulance services.
- Improved dispatch of ambulance services by having all calls for ambulance services in the province handled through wide-area dispatch centres.
- Continuation of cancer outreach treatment programs, which enable rural residents to receive chemotherapy treatment and other supports in or close to their home community.
- Expanded treatment and diagnostic services outside Regina and Saskatoon. For example, the expansion of renal dialysis services with further satellite sites being available for dialysis patients and additional specialized medical imaging services outside Regina and Saskatoon.
- Telehealth Saskatchewan currently allows patients and physicians in rural and remote areas to have consultations through an interactive video link with specialists in larger centres.
- Work with regional health authorities to develop and implement regional population health promotion strategies, taking into consideration provincial priorities and local needs.
- Continuation of efforts related to the Long Term Safe Drinking Water Strategic Plan.
- Continued work towards the implementation of a Northern Health Strategy.
- Encouragement of research related to the challenges of providing health services to rural and remote populations through the Health Research Strategy.
- Implementation of province-wide health human resource planning.

- There are also some specific programs and initiatives targeted to recruiting and retaining physicians in both rural and urban settings. These include:
  - Emergency Room Coverage and Weekend Relief Program
  - Rural Practice Establishment Grant (RPEG) Program
  - Rural Practice Establishment Grant Program (RPEG) for foreign trained Physicians
  - Medical Resident Bursary Program
  - Undergraduate Medical Student Bursary Program

- Rural Practice Enhancement Training
- Rural Emergency Care/CME Program
- Locum Service Program
- Rural Extended Leave Program

S – 33 That the Saskatchewan Government will provide funding to:
Match municipal contributions for emergency and fire protection equipment, telecommunications systems and Global Positioning Services (GPS); Ensure comprehensive 911 linkage to good, co-ordinated, dispatch services with GPS for fire protection and emergency response; and,
Provide funding for adequate training for firemen, first responders, and other rescue personnel for rural communities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Grants already exist for some of the equipment identified above. There are also programs to assist in the reduction of costs for fire department equipment, such as the municipal fire truck (Education and Health) exemption Regulations.

- The telecommunications equipment grant provides some cost sharing support but is not on a 50/50 basis. This program has not been fully used by communities and the uptake is therefore lagging projected demand.

a) Financial Assistance for comprehensive linkages of 911 with dispatch and GPC

- At the present time Sask 911 is specifically mandated to ensure that the 9-1-1 service is available in rural Saskatchewan. The provincial role in this service focuses on call taking and transfer to a police, fire or emergency medical services (EMS) dispatch agency.
- A 9-1-1 geographic information systems (GIS) map has been developed by the province to assist the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in locating callers and to log specific information relating to EMS and fire response areas. This service and role of the provincial government is on-going

b) Financial support for training

- Training for fire services is a local responsibility. The province does not provide financial assistance beyond the services in kind as described above under training.

S – 34 The provincial government develop a recognized program that provides people with the opportunity to build their entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills in the agri-value sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- There are programs available in the business programs and faculties of SIAST, the universities and regional colleges.
- The new Agri-Business Development branch will be working with entrepreneurs.
- SAFRR provided funding to the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development to provide an opportunity for communities to participate in the Leadership Saskatchewan program.
- This remains under active examination by the ACRE Business Development Subcommittee.

S – 35 The Saskatchewan Government utilize existing resources to establish resources to establish a venture management initiative that would match experienced managers with new or expanding agri-business.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR is currently working with several partners in developing what will be a "Business Mentorship" initiative.
- This remains under active examination by the ACRE Business Development Subcommittee.

S – 36 Enhance agriculture in school curriculum and acknowledge its importance to Saskatchewan and Canada.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A science credit at the grade 11 level can be earned in Agriculture 20. As well, there are numerous courses that contain an agricultural perspective within the Practical and Applied Arts such as Agriculture Studies 30; Horticulture 10, 20, 30; Wildlife Management 10, 20, 30; Food Studies 10, 30; and, Forestry Studies 20, 30.

- Saskatchewan Learning has a partnership with Agriculture in the Classroom that has been very beneficial to Saskatchewan schools and is currently part of the group including Agriculture in the Classroom, Saskatchewan Labour, and others that developed and implemented the *Grow Up With Safety* school resources (health-education support). There is a strong farm safety component in this resource.

- The Green Certificate program provides hands-on training and experience in various lines of agriculture, including feedlot, cow/calf, dairy, sheep, crop, irrigated crop production and aerial application. Approximately 90 people receive training through the program each year.

- On March 25, 2003 a memorandum of understanding was signed between the FSIN and SIAST. This partnership between the two organizations is going to mean new agricultural training for First Nations people. SIAST will be delivering the training where the people are, at the First Nation sites so people can stay in their home communities.

S – 37 The Province of Saskatchewan develop a labour strategy to meet the resource sector's ongoing labour needs. This strategy needs to recruit youth and aboriginal people and provide them with the necessary skills so that they can live and work in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Education and Labour Market Planning and Information Strategy supports a system-wide approach to planning for the needs of Saskatchewan learners, employers and communities. It will help ensure that the post-secondary system is responsive to the changing knowledge and skill requirements of the Saskatchewan labour market.

- Through co-operating with First Nations and Métis partners as well as other sector partners, a Post-Secondary Sector Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan was designed to improve access and success of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education, training and employment.

- The government is working on a strategy to address the needs of youth and Aboriginal people within the labour force.

- Canada Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services (CSCES) in 2003-04, provided an array of employment programs and supports to 24,000 persons to assist their transition to employment. These

include resource centres, job posting information, liasing with employers and programs to improve the education and job readiness skills of potential employees.

- The Department of Labour works independently and with government and non-government stakeholders to help ensure that youth and resource sector employees and employers become more aware of their rights and responsibilities under The Labour *Standards Act* and *The Occupational Health and Safety Act.*

- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 38 The Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan work together to implement a province-wide mentorship program. For example, a project manager would be assigned to a project in a community to work with the volunteers to initiate the planning process and provide direction and experience of navigating a project through the regulations of government and financial institutions.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S – 35.

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 39 Encourage professionals and tradespersons to live and work in rural Saskatchewan by:
- **Supporting and promoting the concept of local municipalities and professional/trade organizations financing the education of tradespersons and professionals, with a requirement for service in rural Saskatchewan; and,**
- **Recognizing the need for isolation and remoteness incentives to attract professionals to rural areas.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- To address the needs of local administration GR in partnership with RMAA, UMAA, SARM and SUMA established a Municipal Leadership Development Program that provides training to rural and urban administrators/clerks and elected officials. Administrators and clerks work in over 800 municipalities throughout the province.

- Further work needs to be done.

- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 40 Entrepreneurial training is needed for arts and culture. Research on opportunities and business models need to be made available.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Currently a number of mentoring and training programs exist or are being contemplated. The Cultural Industries Development Council represents organizations such as book publishers, sound recording, craft and visual artists and art galleries. Their focus is helping Saskatchewan artists market their work. A contact for the Council is the Saskatchewan Publishers Group at www.Saskpublishers.ca.

- CARFAC – a visual artist advocacy organization-- provides mentoring services and workshops for visual artists often related to setting up business and marketing work. Contact www.Carfac.sk.ca.

- The Saskatchewan Craft Council has developed a business planning program for members. Contact www.Saskcraftcouncil.org.

- SI[illegible] has done extensive work with Art and Craft Businesses to examine their marketing needs. In this regard we have worked collaboratively with CYR and industry associations to determine needs.

S – 41 Performing and visual arts events, often located in larger urban centers, provide rural communities with opportunities for community-based entertainment, culture, and an enhanced quality of life. Public arts policy must assist rural areas to develop these opportunities at a local level.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils tours exhibitions and performing arts activity throughout Saskatchewan often over a 12 month period. www.OSAC.sk.ca.

- Galleries such as the Mackenzie in Regina have an extensive exhibition/education program taken to rural communities each year. Contact www.Mackenzieartgallery.sk.ca.

- SaskCulture exists to help its member groups offer numerous cultural programming and training opportunities

throughout the province. From community theatre to historic property renovation programs, SaskCulture's members have programs that serve the entire province and stretch across the total spectrum of cultural offerings, training and development assistance. Contact them at www.saskculture.sk.ca

- The Saskatchewan Arts Board plays a central role in making the arts accessible to Saskatchewan residents.

- Communities have also taken the initiative to make the arts available to Saskatchewan residents. Just one example of this is the Centre 48 initiative in South East Saskatchewan.

S – 42 That entrepreneurial training be developed and included in our K-12 school system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Entrepreneurship 30 is included under the Practical and Applied Arts (PAA) renewal process. Entrepreneurship 30 is an elective course that may be used as one of the required PAA components. It is typically offered as an elective for Grade 12 students. Entrepreneurship 30 has a strong enrolment with an excess of 1200 students.

- The PAA curricula include a focus on ten Transition to Work Dimensions, one of which is entrepreneurship. These dimensions are expected to be addressed in the entire Practical and Applied Arts courses.

S – 43 Saskatchewan's post-secondary educational institutions should give increased priority to practices that contribute to retaining young people in Saskatchewan, especially rural Saskatchewan by:
- **Being more aggressive in recruiting and retaining our high school graduates through scholarships and other incentives; and,**
- **Allocating seats in various professions and disciplines giving priority to students who will commit to future service in rural Saskatchewan.**

Government Response/Example(s):

Recruitment and Retention:

- Saskatchewan is the only province with a graduate tax credit for post-secondary graduates. The Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit is a one-time tax credit that graduates and journeypersons may apply against their Saskatchewan Income Tax. For 2003-04 the graduate tax credit will

increase from $350 to $500 for students who graduate from eligible post-secondary institutions after January 1, 2004. The Tax Credit will continue to increase each year to $1,000 by 2007.

- Centennial Merit Scholarship targets top students from Saskatchewan high schools and enhances the ability of institutions to attract and retain high-calibre students. The funding is paid to institutions responsible for its administration. Total funding amounts to $500,000.

- Other scholarships available to Saskatchewan Students are the Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship in Parliamentary Studies and D.R. Simmons Memorial Scholarships. The Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship is a $10,000 award given annually for graduate or post-graduate study of Saskatchewan politics and government at either of Saskatchewan's universities. The D.R. Simmons Memorial Scholarship is in the amount of $500 and is available annually to graduating Grade 12 Saskatchewan students of First Nations or Métis ancestry who are continuing studies at the post-secondary level.

Service Commitments in Rural Saskatchewan:

- The newly announced SIFC/U of S/SIAST Nursing Education Program (NEPs) of Saskatchewan is specific to educate individuals for northern Saskatchewan. The Northern NEPs program is located in Prince Albert and preference for the 40 seats will be given to Aboriginal students and residents of northern Saskatchewan. In addition, there are several initiatives and programs targeted to attracting and keeping physicians in rural Saskatchewan. These include:
  - Rural Practice Establishment Grants
  - Rural Practice Enhancement Training

- The full NEPs program started in September 2003 with 38 registered.

- As well, the Northern Health Science Access Program in Prince Albert is designed to help people enter a variety of health programs offered by the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), and the University of Saskatchewan (U of S). This program is a partnership between the provincial government and three educational post-secondary institutions – FNUC, SIAST, and U of S; the Northern Intertribal Health Authority and the Métis Employment Training of Saskatchewan. There were 19 graduates in 2002-03 and 28 graduates in 2003-04.

- Saskatchewan Health also offers bursaries for students that are prepared to sign "return for service" contracts in a number of disciplines. Some of the bursaries are more quickly forgiven if they work in rural areas than in urban ones.

S – 44 The people of Saskatchewan will:

- **Develop a vision of public education that promotes a broad liberal education at the secondary level; and,**
- **Ensure post-secondary institutions have a vision of specialized education.**

Government Response/Example(s):

K-12:

- The Goals of Education for Saskatchewan schools provide direction for a broad, general education that outlines the foundation knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities for a successful life.

- Opportunities to develop the *Common Essential Learnings* are central in the K-12 education system. If students can communicate well, are numerate, are critical and creative thinkers, have positive social values and skills, are technologically literate, and are independent learners by the time they finish high school, they will be well-equipped to become productive, contributing members of society.

- Partnerships, such as the School^{PLUS} and Early Childhood Development initiatives, within the Saskatchewan community strengthen the system to ensure that all Saskatchewan children and youth benefit from the breadth of the Saskatchewan curriculum.

Post-Secondary Education:

- Post-secondary education institutions in Saskatchewan have a well-developed vision of the importance of both general and specialized education, as evidenced by the current array of programs and services offered.

S – 45 The people of Saskatchewan will:
Adopt the philosophical structure of community schools in rural education systems as outlined by Saskatchewan Learning. As a hub for a network of community organizations, community schools can foster the development and well being of the entire community. Increased utilization of schools at the community level is needed.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The number of community schools has extended from urban elementary and northern schools to secondary and rural schools and have more than doubled since 2000 from 41 to 88.

- On February 21, 2002, the Government of Saskatchewan endorsed the vision of School^{PLUS}, a concept that sees schools as the centre of the community, and hubs for the delivery of an array of services and supports for the children and families they serve. Its goal is to create the conditions where all children and young people have the opportunity and supports needed for healthy development and success in school and life. It is a "cultural change" in the way our communities meet the needs of children and youth. School^{PLUS} requires the concerted and sustained efforts of families, communities, human service providers and schools working together over time. It is evolving differently in each school and community. It will continue to evolve based on student and community need.

S – 46 Post-secondary institutions will change post-secondary requirements (real and assumed) to reflect the vision of public education (e.g. calculus, seven sciences). There is currently not adequate time to take a range of classes in the secondary system if post-secondary education entrance requirements and expectations are met.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The department includes post-secondary representatives on provincial curriculum reference committees. In this way, post-secondary representatives have input into curriculum content (e.g., Grade 12 English language arts curriculum) and become knowledgeable about the direction of new curricula. In some cases, this has caused post-secondary institutions to change the content of their course offerings (e.g., introductory English language arts courses at university).

- As the department develops Grade 12 curricula, our provincial Saskatchewan Learning registrar forwards course descriptions of our new curricula to post-secondary institutions so that they can determine what courses they will accept to meet university entrance requirements for particular post-secondary programs.

- Meetings are held between department staff and post-secondary faculty (university deans and SIAST deans) to discuss new Grade 12 courses and potential use for entrance requirements or post-secondary credit.

- Meetings are held among department staff, SIAST and the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to determine Secondary Level Practical and Applied Arts courses that will be accepted to challenge the Level 1 Apprenticeship exam (e.g., Welding 10, 20, and 30).

S – 47 The Government of Saskatchewan promote immigration of families and extended families and that the obstacles for professions such as teachers and nurses be eliminated, and that farmers and agriculture workers be considered as a priority and that potential partnerships be developed with First Nations for the utilizations of labour and Treaty Lands as well as provincial farm lands.

Government Response/Example(s):

- While immigration overall is primarily a federal responsibility, the Immigration Branch of Government Relations is working with business, industry and the agricultural sector to address specific skill shortages and other rural development needs through targeted immigration under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP). The program provides business and industry with access to needed skilled workers and streamlined immigration procedures for applicants and their families.

- In terms of obstacles facing teachers and nurses, GR will continue to work in co-operation with the Departments of Health and Learning to facilitate access to information on assessment of international qualifications. GR will continue to facilitate access to professions and trades in Saskatchewan to potential immigrants abroad and to immigrants and refugees in the province. GR will also continue to address accreditation issues through relevant federal-provincial and local immigration forums.

- The Province supports labour and economic development partnerships between First Nations and public and private industry.

- Through the Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP), FNMR works in partnership with 40 employers, education institutions, government departments and unions to promote employment, cultural and economic development. FNMR currently has AEDP partnerships with Piapot First Nation, the Agency Chiefs Tribal Council, and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples of Saskatchewan.

III Infrastructure
S – 48 Processing of horticultural crops could be encouraged to enhance the viability of irrigation production. **Government Response/Example(s):** • The SAFRR manufacturing strategy includes horticulture and vegetables as a strategic area.
S – 49 The province change its policy on how it charges for permits that allow users to run primary weights on secondary weight highways. The fees for TPP should be changed so that businesses wishing to run trucks at primary weights over secondary weight highways are charged a fee, which reflects the costs of the incremental damage caused to the secondary weight highways by using primary weights. The fee would apply for every km that a truck runs on a secondary weight highway at primary weights. The shipper would no longer be required to share the benefits with DHT associated with fewer trips. The fees should be administered fairly and equitably across all industries and all road users. **Government Response/Example(s):** • DHT does not intend to change the policy as it applies to heavy hauls where vehicles are carrying loads above primary weights. However, the policy for primary weights being carried on secondary weight roads has been revised, to support the movement of certain agricultural products. The revisions to the TPP allow producers and shippers to save on trucking costs by hauling primary weights on secondary weight highways. In return for the ability to access increased weights, shippers pay incremental road damage costs caused by primary weight hauls on secondary highways, a share of productivity savings on the secondary weight portion of the trip and an annual $200 administrative fee. Productivity savings were previously assessed on the entire trip, from origin to destination. The revisions apply to the movement of livestock to intermediary or processing facilities, potatoes, feed grains, oilseeds, pulse crops and agricultural products moved by container or trailer on flat car trailers. • The department is also in the process of reviewing the winter weight policy (duration and application to 8 axle trucks).

- SARM's Clearing the Path initiative will further examine transportation impediments at the local level and the government will consider recommendations that may flow from process.

S – 50 The province amend legislation which would allow municipalities the ability to assess special fees on industries which create extra road costs above and beyond the normal road traffic loads. The extra fees should be administered fairly and equitably across all industries and all road users.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Rural municipalities currently have the ability to enter into road haul maintenance agreements. GR is working with municipal stakeholders to consolidate the urban and rural municipal acts. The new consolidated act will allow urban municipalities to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.

- GR will be undertaking a review of the road haul maintenance fee structure to determine if any adjustments are needed. Affected municipal and industry stakeholders will be consulted.

- GR, SAFRR and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative. SARM is reviewing road haul agreements.

S – 51 The province, in consultation with stakeholders, establish an integrated transportation corridor system. The corridor system should be developed using various information available such as grain, tourist, and trucking routes and using the Rural Road Classification System. The main corridors, road linkages, and feeder roads should all be identified. It should also be recognized that constriction and maintenance funding should be allocated proportionately.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees in principle with the concept of developing an integrated transportation corridor system and has a process in place to identify the corridors. Grain corridors have been identified in conjunction with the Prairie Grain Roads Program (PGRP). The corridors that were identified were reviewed with the Area Transportation Planning Committees (ATPCs) to ensure the appropriate roads were targeted as grain corridors.

- SARM, under the "Clearing the Path" initiative, has established a committee to examine this issue.

- ACRE Infrastructure Subcommittee is also examining this issue.

- As the corridor system is identified and evolves, the process in place will ensure that adequate consultations with stakeholders occur. The process will include pertinent stakeholder groups including the ATPCs and use of the transportation plans that have been developed by the ATPCs.

S – 52 The province develop transportation infrastructure investment strategies that maximize rates of return to the economy. The investment strategies also must recognize the role of rural areas in generating GDP. The investment strategies must be developed for both the long-term and the short-term.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT currently uses the Asset Management System to determine preservation investment strategies. Condition ratings on the transportation system are done on an annual basis and fed into the Asset Management System. The system then calculates the optimum preservation program for the available funding.

- Funding for capital investments such as twinning, forestry expansion, rural roads etc. becomes dependent on the level of investment required to provide and operate a safe transportation system and the level of investment required to preserve the existing system. Capital projects are very expensive running as high as $500,000 per kilometer. It is, therefore, important that capital is strategically invested to meet the most important needs of society and the economy.

S – 53 Policies, practices and procedures be developed that require provincial government departments to work together in a more integrated, collaborative and complementary manner to ensure integrated development of the transportation system. When appropriate, this must be done inter-jurisdictionally to ensure the integrated development of the transportation system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT concurs with the goal of this recommendation and will continue to work towards an integrated system by focusing on many fronts.

- On a local basis, the department regularly works with SARM and SUMA and the ATPC's to promote the

transportation system so it can best support the economic and social needs of the province.

S – 54 The Department of Highways and Transportation develop a policy to accommodate changing weight requirements and road capabilities. Authority to approve weight designation changes should rest with the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Significant changes to weight restrictions above current levels are a major public policy issue with many financial ramifications to the province. As with any major public policy issue, Cabinet approval is required when significant changes are proposed. DHT is currently consulting with stakeholders regarding current weight designations for the principal and regional transportation systems.

- Section 35 subsections (1) and (2) of the Highways and Transportation Act, 1997, authorize the Minister of DHT to approve weight designation changes as suggested above.

- As a result of a review by GR of municipal road issues in the heavy oil producing area of Saskatchewan, in 2003 amendments were made to *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* to provide authority for all rural municipalities to designate primary weights and truck routes for municipal roads. The new authorities provide for harmonization among rural municipalities and with provincial standards, as well as a dispute resolution process when a municipality or municipalities and road users cannot agree to the method or harmonizing weight limits or designated truck routes. The dispute resolution will help to ensure continuity of transportation routes across jurisdictions.

- GR is working with municipal stakeholders to consolidate the rural and urban municipality acts. The consolidated act will propose that both rural and rural municipalities continue to have authority to designate primary weights and transportation routes and a dispute resolution process. It will also propose that urban municipalities be allowed to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.

- GR has jurisdiction over municipal roads and is currently in the process of amending municipal legislation regarding weights designations. The amendments will allow municipalities to the ability to designate their roads as primary weight roads if they so choose.

S – 55 The province provide adequate resources to assess the load bearing capacities, width capacities and conditions of all municipal and provincial bridges.

Government Response/Example(s):

- With the trend to larger trucks it is important to assess the capacity capabilities of the bridges in the province. DHT has increased staffing levels to better expedite bridge inspections so that bridge capacity and condition deficiencies can be addressed in an integrated strategic manner.

S – 56 All levels of government and industry establish a process for providing information to the road authorities on impending and future economic development projects.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees that it is important to be included at a very early stage in impending and future economic development projects. The department established the ATPCs in order to work toward improving communications between road authorities and economic development initiatives around the province. DHT will continue to provide resources in support of the ATPC initiative.

S – 57 The Department of Highways and Transportation should significantly increase the use of their authority to audit weigh bill tickets. Depending on the circumstance, an overweight charge should be laid on the basis of an audit or the audit could be used in conjunction with other enforcement measures.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In 2002 a new audit program was developed and implemented. The program involves shifting some existing human resources through the winter months to complete weight audits. In the winter of 2002/03 6 traffic officers were deployed to this new initiative to compliment the existing 6 transport investigators.

- DHT is in the process of conducting educational seminars with the ATPCs. The purpose of the seminars is to educate the public regarding the legislative changes and the auditing.

S – 58 Regulations and policies need to be put in place to ensure efficient and adequate random auditing can be done. To ensure fairness and equity, all industries and those involved in moving goods by truck would be subject to random weight audits.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In 2002 a new audit program was developed and implemented. The program includes the use of intelligence from present department databases and staff to determine which companies will be audited. The program includes three different approaches: 1) Worst offenders based on tickets issued. 2) Industry focus. 3) Random. Current legislation under Section 63 of *The Highways and Transportation Act* provides the department with the authority to carry out this program.

- DHT is in the process of conducting educational seminars with the ATPCs. The purpose of the seminars is to educate the public regarding the legislative changes and the auditing.

S – 59 The Department of Highways and Transportation and Area Transportation Planning Committees educate the public regarding our highway system, its construction and what it is capable of handling for weights. This should include things like damage costs caused by overweight vehicles and by the speed of vehicles.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Part of DHT's overall strategy is to consult with and educate stakeholders. An information package is currently being developed regarding highway designs and the impacts of weights and speeds on the roads. The information package will be used to educate the ATPCs and other stakeholders. The ATPCs will in turn be able to educate their members on issues regarding designs, weights and speeds.

S – 60 There be no further increase in the primary weights, regardless of what other provinces do, until the primary weight transportation system in the province is at a long-term standard capable of handling increased weights. An exception to this would be where 100 percent federal funding is made available to address national/international harmonization issues.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT is always under pressure to increase weight restrictions on the roads. Increases in allowable weights are an important element in improving overall productivity in the economy. Increases in allowable weights can reduce the cost of moving goods to market resulting in a more competitive position for Saskatchewan businesses in the global market place.

S – 61 The province change the existing legislation to permit rural municipalities to designate routes for weights, dangerous goods and dimension (over-sized) loads.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT is working with GR to amend current legislation so as to allow municipalities to designate haul routes up to primary weights.

S – 62 The province commit to work collaboratively and co-operatively with appropriate stakeholders to plan, develop and implement a sustainable integrated rural air access strategy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recognizes the importance of air access to rural Saskatchewan. Through ongoing dialogue with the Saskatchewan Aviation Council, programs have been developed to assist with airport operating costs. There has been some interest expressed for a capital assistance program and discussions will continue on that front.

S – 63 That the Government of Saskatchewan continue to treat all future short lines as commercial ventures.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Short line railways are currently treated as commercial ventures. There are no plans to change this policy.

S – 64 The Federal Government fund the construction and maintenance of the national highway system in Canada.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees that there is a need for more federal funding and in particular ongoing funding for a national highway system. There has been some success in procuring federal funding on a somewhat ad hoc basis. Examples include the Canada Ag-Infrastructure Program, PGRP, the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the Border Infrastructure Fund and the Strategic Highways Infrastructure Program.

S – 65 It is recommended that any permits, fines for overweight vehicles or other charges, directly related to road costs, collected by the Department of Highways and Transportation should remain with the Department of Highways and Transportation rather than being allocated to the General Revenue Fund for the Province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The current fiscal policy of the government is that all revenues accruing to the government accrue in the Consolidated General Revenue Fund. Any changes in this policy are at the discretion of Cabinet.

S – 66 The Province conduct an independent review of existing Department of Highways and Transportation contracts used for construction, maintenance and engineering contracting to the private sector to ensure the department is receiving value for money.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recently underwent a value for money audit of the tendering process with no major concerns being identified regarding the overall process. All DHT expenditures are subject to provincial audits on an annual basis.

- When contractors are hired through the tendering process the contractors are required to post a performance bond. Any performance problems result in the forfeiture of some or all of the performance bond and also result in the contractors returning to rectify any problems that do occur.

• DHT has recently changed the design standards to improve the quality of the infrastructure that is being upgraded or built.
S – 67 The province direct the Crown utilities to work with road authorities to achieve an efficient transportation and utility distribution system that is cost effective and workable for all parties. Prior to construction/ reconstruction of linear utilities the consultation process must also include adjacent landowners. **Government Response/Example(s):** • DHT agrees in principle with all parties working together to resolve any differences regarding the Crown utilities use of rights-of-way. DHT will continue to work with the Crowns to achieve the best solutions possible for all stakeholders.
S – 68 A special trailer could be designed that would allow a heavier container to be transported on Saskatchewan's secondary weight roads, therefore, the province and industry should work together to develop a trucking method and axle system to accommodate the use of containers to their maximum capacity. **Government Response/Example(s):** • DHT works closely with industry on an ongoing basis to develop technologies that are capable of providing a better distribution of weights over the roads in a safe, economic and efficient manner.
S – 69 The province, industry and educational institutions promote the opportunities, careers and training that are available in the transportation sector. **Government Response/Example(s):** DHT recognizes the challenges of promoting the transportation sector regarding the opportunities, careers and training that are available within the industry. DHT is one of the largest employers of students in the province. This enables students to gain first hand knowledge of and experience in the large variety of career opportunities available in the transportation sector.

S – 70 The trucking industry continue with an increase in their presence at high schools and public forums in promoting the interest and respect of the trucking industry and the job opportunities. **Government Response/Example(s):** • See S – 69.
S – 71 The province update the digital map on the location of airports, airstrips and their classifications in Saskatchewan. **Government Response/Example(s):** • DHT agrees that rural airports and airstrips are important to the rural economy and is working the Aviation Council on a number of air issues including identifying the location of the airports and airstrips in rural Saskatchewan.
S – 72 The province continue the Short line Advisory Unity in the Department of Highways and Transportation and continue to develop, in consultation with existing short lines and local stakeholders, regulations under the Saskatchewan Railway Act. **Government Response/Example(s):** • DHT plans on continuing to support the Short Line Advisory Unit or any of their activities.
S – 73 The Department of Highways and Transportation, the Area Transportation Planning Committees(ATPCs) and the Saskatchewan Trucking Association (STA) work together to promote truck safety and to increase the public's awareness and perception of large trucks. **Government Response/Example(s):** • SGI has developed several media spots relating to large trucks on the road. The ads highlight stopping distances and blind spots.

S – 74 The province, in conjunction with the municipalities, conduct a detailed review to determine the potential current and future uses for railway rights-of-way and develop a plan to preserve them where necessary. The province should also develop legislation to fairly deal with the removal of a rail line.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT would prefer to see all Rights-of Way (ROWs) operating as railways so as to relieve pressure from large trucks on roads that were never designed to handle the weights they are being subjected to. DHT feels that some of the ROWs could be used as corridors for heavy hauls.

- SARM has formed a committee under their "Clearing the Path" initiative to examine transportation issues.

S – 75 That the Government of Saskatchewan provide funding to the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) to provide basic public passenger and freight transportation services to rural Saskatchewan where use warrants.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Since inception in 1998, STC has been receiving funding from CIC. STC provides service to 275 communities in the province, and, through interline partnerships with other bus companies, reaches almost 400 Saskatchewan communities, as well as all of North America. In 2003, STC received an operating grant of $1.6 million from CIC and carried 258,841 passengers and 1,275,000 parcels for its customers.

S – 76 In an effort to be more proactive, all jurisdictions responsible for roads and transportation must do a better job of educating the public on the load capacity of roads and highways, the importance or weight compliance and safety issues.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Part of DHT's overall strategy is to consult with and educate stakeholders. An information package is currently being developed regarding highway designs and the impacts of weights and speeds on the roads. The information package will be used to educate the ATPCs and other stakeholders. The ATPCs will in turn be able to educate their members on issues regarding designs, weights and speeds.

S – 77 Highway signage is very important to rural communities and businesses. Directional signage for communities must be effective and up-to-date. Provision of signage within the highway right-of-way for specific businesses and community services should be available on a cost-recovery or cost-shared basis.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recognizes that signage is an important element in rural economic development. The department has undertaken consultation with stakeholders and is in the process of evaluating potential options.
- Further work needs to be done to highlight communities including First Nation communities and the services provided within these communities.

S – 78 The Department of Highways must have a three-year capital works program to be more timely and cost-effective and to allow multi-year funding commitments.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees with having a timely and cost effective three-year capital works program. The department was unable, until very recently, to publish a three-year plan due to the ongoing negotiations that had been taking place with the federal government regarding federal funding programs. Negotiations are essentially complete and DHT intends to publish a three-year capital program.

S – 79 Given the continuation of declining enrollments and school closures, policies and programs for renovations of facilities must be given at least the same priority as construction of new facilities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Over the past number of years, the Department of Learning (and formerly the Department of Education) spent the vast majority of its available K-12 capital budget in the area of replacement of building systems, modernization, and restoration activities with some additions to existing facilities. Some new schools have been announced and built in recent years, and a good proportion of them were for replacement of schools that had outlived their economic and functional lives (i.e., it was more cost effective and functionally appropriate to build new than to renovate). The new schools built over the past several years and not in this category were for areas of the province where enrolment growth occurred. Given that there were 778 K-12

facilities in the province as of September 2002, the number of "new" buildings, as a proportion of that number, has been very small.

- In order to place even further emphasis on maintaining existing facilities, the Department approved-in-principle a new Restoration Program in 2002.

- The Restoration Program was created through consultation with stakeholders (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and the Council Educational Facility Planners, International). The proposal met with virtually unanimous endorsement from all school divisions across the province. A capital reference committee is being established to further review and refine the program.

S – 80 That the Government of Saskatchewan develop an Internet based central cataloguing system of available SaskHousing units for rent or purchase in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) views the recommendation on the development of an internet based central cataloguing system as a positive initiative, and will investigate a staged development of a site.

- The use of the Internet as a marketing tool would provide wider exposure to the supply of units available for rent or sale. An internet site would have to be continually updated and maintained. In order to be effective, the information for the site should be linked to a property management system capable of accommodating this feature. The current system can not easily accommodate this requirement.

- A new housing information system is currently being implemented. This system has the potential to accommodate a link with an internet site; however this will require some additional systems development costs.

- Saskbiz was developed so that other agencies could access the data layers (and add others) using the system with their own URLs and different facades.

S – 81 A program should be established to assist small communities with the energy costs of operating cultural and recreational facilities and to encourage energy efficiency in operating local facilities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskPower is developing three demonstration projects in 2003-2004 to define options for financing and implementing energy efficiency projects in community facilities.
  - The first project will target municipal and community facilities only, including the ice rink and community centre, in a rural community (1200 to 3500 population), or group of communities, and will be located within 300 km of Saskatoon to minimize staff travel costs. Community selection will begin in April 203.
  - The second project will target municipal, community and commercial facilities in a rural community.
  - A third project, to target a First Nation community with electric heat (no natural gas service available) and incorporate geo-exchange technology, will be developed in late 2003.

- SaskPower currently offers energy performance contracting to commercial and institutional customers with total energy costs greater than $250,000. Customer satisfaction research with small to medium customers and shareholder expectations, demonstrate a need to create a similar service that meets the unique needs of institutional and commercial customers with total energy costs of less than $250,000 per year. The concept of a Community Facilities Energy Management Service was further developed as a measure within the Saskatchewan GreenPrint.

- A Community Facilities Energy Management Service offers a mechanism for community facilities such as ice rinks to mitigate the impact of increases to electricity costs associated with rate re-balancing, as well as rising natural gas costs.

- The long term objective (12-14 months) is to develop a service that packages technical, financial and project management resources enabling improved energy efficiency for bundled community and business facilities with total energy costs less than $250,000 per year.

S – 82 Endorsement of SaskPower's Green Power Program and the pursuit of wind-power, co-generation and other electricity generational alternatives, many of which appear to be feasible in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- As of September 2004, SaskPower has selected three project proposals for the first year of its Environmentally Preferred Power (EPP) program. The program creates the opportunity for SaskPower to

partner with independent power producers to build and operate small-scale generation projects, with up to 5 megawatts (MW) capacity, in order to meet Saskatchewan's projected energy needs until 2010 with no new greenhouse gas emissions. Subsequent RFPs will be issued in 2004 and 2005, for a total solicitation of 45 MW. The first in-service date for any project would be 2005. Eligible technologies would include solution flare gas, wind, run-of-the-river hydro, biomass, biogas, heat recovery from existing waste heat source, landfill gas and photovoltaic.

- Saskatchewan is in the process of developing a strategy to foster development of a "Green and Prosperous Economy".

S – 83 Government needs to play a strong advisory, advocacy, co-ordination and regulatory role to ensure the protection of vital water resources for present and future generations.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan has developed and is implementing a Safe Drinking Water Strategy.
- The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority was created to protect Saskatchewan's watersheds, through allocation of water rights and studies of surface and ground water supplies, ensures water use does not exceed the sustainable supply.
- The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority is leading development of a Water Conservation Plan. The plan will be completed in 2006.
- Agrivision released their "50 year plan for water" at a conference in November 2004. Government will carefully study the recommendations coming out of the conference and contained within the plan.

S – 84 Education on water quality management and monitoring is needed for rural residents and municipal technicians.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Under the Safe Drinking Water Strategy, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority was designated to lead an interdepartmental and interagency plan for public education on all aspects of watershed management and drinking water issues.

- The Authority supports a number of educational programs, primarily directed to school-aged children. The most significant of these is Project WET (Water Education for Teachers).

- The Authority delivers a number of stewardship programs that work with land owners to protect watersheds.

- A toll-free inquiry line (1-866-SASK-H20) has been established. This service provides citizens with one contact number for their water related questions.

- SaskWater provides water and waste water training to local communities, including some northern First Nations communities, on a fee-for-service basis.

S – 85 The role and support of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) in farm rural water development, which has diminished in recent years, should be restored to previous levels.

Government Response/Example(s):

- PFRA is a federal agency. However, Saskatchewan's basic annual allocation under PFRA's Rural Water Development Program has been stable at $2.2 million for the past five years. This program was enhanced over the 2001-02 and 2002-03 period through the Canada-Saskatchewan Livestock Farm Water Program with an additional $2.5 million in Federal contributions and $1.5 million in Provincial contributions. One half million dollars of the federal contribution was allocated to strategic research projects; the balance of the federal funding and all of the provincial funding was allocated to on-farm projects.

- Saskatchewan participates in the National Water Supply Enhancement Program (NWSEP), a four year $60 million initiative to improve communities and producer's capacity to deal with drought situations through expanded rural water supply

S – 86 A local approach and cooperation between municipalities should be encouraged for firefighting services. Incentives should promote co-operation between municipalities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) has encouraged and supported co-operation among municipalities for fire fighting services since 1994. This is a trend across North America as jurisdictions identify the benefits of area-wide services.

- The services offered by the OFC are ongoing, however there are no recommendations to provide financial

incentives. The OFC continues to update and modify models and advisory systems to assist municipalities develop are-wide services to address technology.

- The resource needs for municipalities vary widely to undertake a risk and needs assessment for area wide services. SUMA has a subcommittee on emergency services, which has shown some interest in this issue, and a presentation was made at the SUMA conference in February 2003. There has been no further follow-up requested from SUMA. The presentation was offered to SARM for their 2002 conference, but there was no response back on the offer.

S – 87 There is a need to create awareness of what citizens can do to supplement police services through programs such as: Rural Crime Watch, Crime Stoppers, and Citizens on Patrol.

Government Response/Example(s):

- **Rural Crime Watch:** Community based and pro-active. Addressed through SARM. Programs within province range from active to almost non existent with variety of reasons such as strong leadership and interest to lack of those points. Population to support program to sparse numbers making program weak. Program works on volunteer method and financed through fund raising activities.

- **Citizens On Patrol Program:** Community based and pro-active. Addressed through SUMA. Created from the Rural Crime Watch concept to address municipal crime concerns. Program is becoming stronger throughout the province as community members become more aware of how they can take responsibility for addressing crime within their own communities and an avenue that allows citizens to work and communicate directly with their local police members. Approx. 25 communities under RCMP jurisdiction active within province. Program works on volunteer method and financed through fund raising activities.

- **Crime Stoppers:** Community/police based program. Program funded through sponsorship by various groups/businesses within the province. Strong advertising campaign to continually put message across to general public.

- Awareness created through citizens and peace officers becoming more informed by accessing available written material, attending informational sessions put on by identified groups, becoming more involved in a group and talking to people who belong to these groups.

S – 88 Training for firefighting must include rural conditions.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S-86

S – 89 ACRE strongly reiterates the January 2001 recommendation for extension of high-speed Internet and cellular telephone services throughout Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskTel provides access to high-speed phone lines and cellular coverage in order to keep pace with new technology.

- SaskTel has invested $24 million to increase digital cell phone coverage to additional Saskatchewan communities. By 2003, digital cellular service will be available to more than 90 per cent of Saskatchewan's population, serving more than 270,000 square km.

- In March 2002, SaskTel announced the expansion of its High Speed Internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years under the province's CommunityNet high speed internet initiative.

- In June 2004, the second phase of CommunityNet was launched. An additional 71 communities are being added to the network. As well, most farmsteads and businesses within 30 kilometres of many existing CommunityNet centres will be able to access SaskTel's commercial high-speed network.

- Upon completion of the second phase of CommunityNet, more than 86 per cent of the Saskatchewan population will have access to high speed Internet.

- The Federal Government has made available $7.5 million from BRAND (Broadband for Rural and Northern Development), $2 million from the Northern Development Accord and $525,000 from the federal/provincial Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) over the past 2 years to fund Broadband (high speed internet) in Saskatchewan. The majority of benefactors live in rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. They also provide $5 million for the first phase of CommunityNet and an additional $2.25 million to connect all the libraries to high speed internet.

S – 90 The processing of meat from specialized livestock, particularly bison and elk is stumbling because of a lack of aggressive marketing and adequate local processing. Such a Saskatchewan plant would be desirable.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province has been working with specialized livestock producers to increase the marketing of meat products (example bison burgers). As well, government continues to support producer efforts to develop a federally inspected specialized livestock facility.

S – 91 Generally, there is a lack of knowledge in Saskatchewan about the resource sector and its contribution to the rural economy. This committee recommends that the benefits of the resource sector, particularly in terms of employment, be built into the larger communications strategy to encourage rural Saskatchewan to welcome the economic opportunities and employment associated with resource development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Key messages and activities that describe the benefits of the resource sector are integrated into SIR communication plans and activities, such as ministerial speeches, stakeholder events, and promotional information. Some of the communications activities planned by SIR include:
    - Resources and rural development messages will be represented in communications around progress on *Partnership for Prosperity*.
    - Resource messages will be included in *Business Unlimited* (circulated to 10,000 people, many in rural Saskatchewan).
    - Messages will be incorporated into materials at department's display booth at trade shows, such as the Weyburn Oil Show.
    - The resource message will be included in rural events the department regularly holds (i.e. CommunityNet, Small Business Loans Association events), where and when appropriate.
    - Rural outreach through ministerial tours and interviews with rural media.
    - General and sector specific print advertising can incorporate resources/rural messaging, where appropriate.

S – 92 There are opportunities to use the province's hardwood resource (poplar) for purposes including, but not limited to oriented strand board. The committee recommends that the province create an awareness of the opportunities for utilizing the province's hardwood resource so that private investment and related employment can occur.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government supports the development of a Forest Centre of Excellence and has been working with various private and public organizations to bring this concept to reality. The government is working with the City of Prince Albert and Federal Government, Métis and First Nations, and industry to develop partnerships for a building to house various forestry sector specialists to create effective viable synergies. In that, it will accumulate, create, and disseminate forest-related knowledge that creates an internationally competitive and environmentally sustainable forest industry in Saskatchewan.

S – 93 Specific opportunities that should be investigated are listed in the Grains and Oilseeds Subcommittee report.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR, through its Agriculture Manufacturing strategy, has identified key tactics for the development of the grains and oilseed sectors.

S – 94 Intergenerational transfer of farms contains a number of additional considerations beyond those for new entrants. For example, retiring parents needs to have timely access to sufficient capital to retire and need to be confident that the risk of future financial difficultly of the farm will not jeopardize their retirement. Programming needs to be developed to address the specific issues of those exiting the industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Agri-business development staff presently provide business advice to farm families who are contemplating a change to their business operation.

- The Agriculture Policy Framework, Renewal Chapter will advance the program to provide financial support to farmers to develop comprehensive business plans of which succession planning is a significant element.

- The income tax system currently supports such transfers by allowing for the deferral of tax on capital gains on the transfer of farm property from a parent to a child.

- The Bridging Generations Program is targeted at young people who wish to enter the farming industry or expand their operation. The program offers a loan guarantee to participating lenders of 10% for loans that the lender makes to young farmers that are highly leveraged. The program has not been approved at this time.

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 95 It is recommended that the Saskatchewan Government examine mechanisms to form or expand existing community pastures or co-operatives through public, private, and corporate partnerships.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR has neither the resources, nor the mandate, to acquire additional lands to develop new community pastures.

- SAFRR has a long-term goal to improve the grazing capacity of existing pastures to be able to increase the number of livestock that can be grazed.

- The ACRE Subcommittee on Crown Land is examining an overall strategy for Crown land management

S – 96 First Nations control a large land resource that is an integral part of rural Saskatchewan. The committee recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the federal government, work with First Nations to facilitate development of First Nation resources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Although decisions regarding the development of First Nations resources is left to individual First Nations, the government is willing to coordinate and develop linkages and partnerships between First Nations, industry and government.

- The government has a number of working relationships with individual First Nations and the Federation of

Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). In March 2003, the government entered into a new Bilateral agreement with the FSIN to examine issues of mutual concern to First Nations and the Province.

- A Common Table Protocol Agreement with Canada and the FSIN was established to discuss fiscal and jurisdictional matters related to self-government. This process is aimed at creating a new fiscal relationship in support of First Nation's self-government. The government is also participating in negotiations at the self-government table with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Government of Canada.

- Saskatchewan helped sponsor an Aboriginal land conference in June that drew together Aboriginal peoples with a common interest in land and resource management from across the world.

S – 97 The committee recommends the province encourage training of rural residents, including First Nations, to participate in opportunities related to the forestry sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The involvement of rural residents and Aboriginal people in the development of the forest industry is a key component of the forest development strategy.

- The government supports the development of a Forest Centre of Excellence.

- Clarence Campeau Development Fund has a training component, although not specific to forestry. The Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology and the First Nations University also provide support to Aboriginal people in various fields and may be complementary to the forestry industry.

S – 98 SaskEnergy's approach to link rural offices by electronic communications technology and move work to offices with capacity is a model to be considered by provincial government departments, crown corporations and agencies to maintain a presence in rural Saskatchewan, avoid office closures and provide employment.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Where possible technology will continue to be considered as an alternative to allow offices and staff in rural locations to remain.

- Many government departments, Crown Corporations and agencies maintain offices and provide employment opportunities in various parts of the province.

S – 99 Government should also consider the establishment of a feed processing facility that can research and demonstrate the processing, combining of constituents, and evaluating all manner of feedstocks for livestock.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR is funding a feed research chair at the University of Saskatchewan and will work in conjunction with the Prairie Feed Resource Centre. ADF has a Crops/Livestock Interface Program which determines nutritional and functional components of feed and their use in animal production.
- SAFRR provides two additional research chairs to be located at the WBDC to work on feed-related issues.
- Total funding for the 3 research chairs is $495,000.
- SAFRR provides support to the Prairie Swine Centre and the Western Beef development Centre (WBDC) which conduct research and analysis on feed for swine rations and beef feeding.

S – 100 Publicly funded agriculture development programs and services need to be maintained and enhanced to further the growth of Saskatchewan agriculture at primary production and value-added levels.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR's Development Division continue to provide a wide range of programs and services directed at primary production and value added services, these services include; agriculture business development branch, food safety (quality assurance), specialists services supporting both crops and livestock development and funding through R&D to support the development of the agriculture industry in the province. R&D provides funding in areas such as crops, soil and environment, value added processing, and livestock.

S – 101 The federal and provincial governments implement strategies that improve the balance between public and private plant breeding efforts where the public supported breeding meets specific gaps or needs of Saskatchewan producers and result in public ownership of intellectual property.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government, through the Strategic Research Program with the University of Saskatchewan, provides funding for plant breeding including: pulses (lentil, pea, chickpea, and bean), cereals (wheat, oat, barley) and flax. The University is granted ownership of intellectual property on the understanding that the University will use its best efforts to preserve and protect the intellectual and project property and pursue commercialization in Saskatchewan where possible. In addition, funding for plant breeding projects is provided under the SAFRR – ADF Program. The same ownership rights are granted to the University under these contracts.

S – 102 Research related to crop varieties should be focused on variety development that results in specific, profitable, market opportunities for producers.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Under the SAFRR strategic plan one of the objectives is to have increased livestock production and diversification to higher value crops. Two of the priority areas for SAFRR under this strategy include flax and pulses. These crops have the potential to create increased diversity and profitability in the agriculture sector. The Federal Agriculture Policy Framework will provide funding in areas of Food Safety and Quality, Renewal, Environment, Science and Innovation and Business Risk management and corresponding provincial funding will address some of the areas noted above.

- In addition SAFRR provides R&D funding to support the development of new crops through the Strategic Research Program at the U of S and also provides funding through the ADF for R&D projects that are targeted at crops and value-added/processing that will result in increased profitability for the agri-industry.

- SAFRR also supports seven research chairs at the Crop Development Centre at the University of Saskatchewan.

- A new strategic advisory board for the Crop Development Centre has been established.

S – 103 That SAFRR support research into alternate methods of control to strychnine for ground squirrel and pocket gopher control.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The department partners with the Federal Government and the Irrigation Industry through the Irrigated Crop Diversification Corporation (ICDC) in the development of pocket gopher control strategies. 600 people have participated in ICDC field events. Through this work, a private practitioner is now doing control on a per acre fee basis in addition to an Irrigation District ditch rider.

- The Department of Animal and Poultry Science with $70,000 of support out of the Agriculture Development Fund is developing mechanisms for more effective control of the gopher population in Saskatchewan. This three year study is looking to increasing the toxicity of common rodenticides.

- SAFRR, AAFRD and the University of Lethbridge are reviewing a proposal from a MSc student to assess the economic impacts caused by the Richardson's Ground Squirrel.

S – 104 The provincial government provides adequate resources for research into new crops and value added opportunities for existing grains and oilseeds.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAFRR places a high priority by funding research for new crops, oilseeds, cereals and value added. The Agriculture Development Fund ($7.4M) through project funding and money provided to the Strategic Research Program ($3.3M) at the U of S are specific programs that support research for these crop areas.

- See S – 102 for other examples.

S – 105 SAFRR should recognize marketing as an important component of new crop development and value added initiatives and that marketing be incorporated into the mandate of the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

Government Response/Example(s):

- The market research is eligible for funding under ADF.

- Under SAFRR's Agriculture Development Fund projects that are approved for funding must be able to

demonstrate marketability. One of the goals of ADF is to carry out research activities that will have the greatest return for the Saskatchewan agriculture industry. The development of a new Strategic Research Program at the U of S is intended to develop research capacity that will provide targeted research for the province. The new evaluation system for ADF project funding specifically addresses potential economic impact.

S – 106 The industry has developed a niche of expertise in the development of marginal reserves and the province must continue to support relevant oil and gas research and development, through facilities such as the Petroleum Technology Research Center.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan renewed and enhanced its funding commitment to The Petroleum Technology Research Centre (PTRC) with the intent of ensuring its long-term viability.
- The Government of Saskatchewan renewed the Saskatchewan Petroleum Research Incentive (SPRI).
- In addition, the government continues to ensure the continuation of research activities through independent funding requests by the PTRC, U of R and U of S related to this initiative.

S – 107 The provincial government should also support the Forest Centre of Excellence which deals with value-added research and the identification of market opportunities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government supports the development of a Forest Centre of Excellence and has been working with various private and public organizations to bring this concept to reality.
- The Saskatchewan Forest Centre is currently working toward establishing itself to be of national importance in the areas of testing and certification processes.
- The government has been providing operational funding and is prepared to entertain project proposals fitting with the Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) criteria.

S – 108 Incentives to promote exploration and development of natural gas in Saskatchewan should be considered.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government has accepted all the recommendations of Great Sand Hills Land Use Strategy Review Committee enabling gas development to proceed in the ES2 area of the GSH and is also adding more protected land to the area and commissioning a major environmental study of the entire area.

- The measures taken by TransGas to promote the upstream development of the natural gas industry fall into five categories:
    - Direct fiscal measures - TransGas had frozen rates for three years prior to the 2003 January 1 rate increase.
    - Indirect fiscal measures - TransGas has taken measures to ensure the unfettered buying and selling of natural gas. As of October 4, 2004 parties wishing to trade natural gas have access to Saskatchewan gas through NGX a natural gas commodity trading center based in Calgary, managed under the TSX.
    - Marketing and promotion - TransGas undertakes a number of market efforts in addition to our web presence and periodic press releases to promote the upstream industry in the province.
    - Responsive to customer - TransGas' well-established customer dialogue process helps guide TransGas policy formulation to respond to our customers needs.
    - Customer connection process - TransGas prides itself in quick turnaround between producer commitment and having receipt points ready to flow gas.

- Royalty/incentive examples:

    - The Saskatchewan Petroleum Research Incentive.
    - A new lower royalty/tax structure was recently introduced by the province for gas wells drilled on and after October 1, 2002. A lower Corporation Capital Tax Surcharge rate was introduced at the same time for these newly drilled wells. Saskatchewan's royalty/tax rates for new gas wells are very competitive with Alberta and British Columbia.

Transportation Recommendations & Government Actions
T – 1 The province, in consultation with stakeholders, actively monitors and develops, if warranted, a north/south international trade corridor system. **Government Response/Example(s):** • DHT works with neighbouring jurisdictions to improve north-south and east-west road links by upgrading infrastructure, improving border crossings and enhancing trade corridor opportunities. The focus of the discussions has been expediting border crossings in light of increased security measures. • DHT concluded a corridor study in 2002, which identified six corridors of potential interest to our province: o The CANAMEX Corridor; o Camino Real Corridor; o Interstate Route 35 Corridor; o Falls-to-Falls Corridor; o Ports to Plains Corridor; and o The Heartland Expressway. These corridors presently do not terminate at Saskatchewan border crossings but would have potential for Saskatchewan/US trade. Air connections and air access are also of interest as they allow Saskatchewan residents to access U.S. destination points. This is important to Saskatchewan insofar as it may be a deciding factor in whether to locate in the province. • Two primary current initiatives are the Northern Great Plains Transportation, Trade and Economic Development Initiative and an agreement by Western Premiers and Governors to facilitate further development of cross-border transportation initiatives.

T – 2 The province update and print the Rural Road Classification System map to assist in corridor development. The traffic flow maps should be produced in an updated format of the line width graph format, both on a provincial and municipal basis to assist in the development of the traffic corridors.

Government Response/Example(s):

- It is DHT's understanding that SARM will be publishing a new Road map in the spring of 2005.
- DHT is exploring the production of traffic flow maps using the line graph format for road classes 2 to 5 for the municipal road system. Municipal roads are counted on a four to five year rotation for this year it would not be possible to prepare current annual flow maps for all municipalities.
- A line width format to designate traffic counts on a provincial highway map would be difficult to read given that the traffic volumes ranges are essentially 0 to 2300 vehicles per day. It would be more practical for the DHT to assess the feasibility of preparing line width maps for the areas for palling purposes in their identification of traffic corridor on an as needed basis.

T – 3 The province updates design requirements and inspection of municipal constructed roads.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT will provide road construction standards for low traffic volume roads (generally classes 4 & 5). This applies to both provincial highways and municipal roads.

T – 4 Municipalities need to be cautious when issuing primary weight permits to ensure that any bridges along the route are able to withstand the increased weight.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See F – 11, S – 54 and S – 61.

T – 5 The province determines the relationship between infrastructure investment and the provincial GDP and incorporates the findings into investment strategies.

Government Response/Example(s):

- All factors are considered when assessing investments. Investment in infrastructure, generally, increases GDP. Decisions on where, when and how much investment to make in provincial infrastructure (roads, highways, power and gas lines) are made by Cabinet.
- This remains under active examination by the Infrastructure Subcommittee of ACRE.

T – 6 Strengthen the relationship and linkages between Area Transportation Planning Committees and economic development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR officials are working with Area Transportation Planning Committees to address transportation issues.
- However, ATPC Chair persons prefer that the ATPC's remain in an advisory capacity.
- The SARM "Clearing the Path" transportation subcommittee is also examining this.

T – 7 The province, appropriate transportation authorities and industry develop strategies, schedules and facilities that enhance passenger and freight multi-modal services in order to facilitate and promote tourism and trade.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province consults with stakeholders and service providers on an ongoing basis as well as monitoring Federal transportation legislation, regulations and policy to ensure that these instruments create an enabling environment.

T – 8 The province continue to be involved in the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) development to reduce traffic (truck) monitoring costs and assist in the development of the worldwide industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT is working in partnership with Transport Canada, International Road Dynamics of Saskatoon and to some extent, the University of Saskatchewan to develop and deploy the ITS technology. A number of consultation sessions have been completed with various stakeholders including Area Transportation Planning Committees and the Saskatchewan Trucking Association. The department is reviewing various funding options for this issue.

T – 9 The province develop a winter weights regime based on the number of frost days for the various regions of the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- This has been addressed through recent amendments to section 2(1) of The Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations, 1999.

T – 10 That the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency (SAMA) change its criteria for assessing the value of property owned by short line railways, especially in instances where there has been large changes in traffic from the base assessment period.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The rates developed in the SAMA Assessment Manual are established and then applied for a four-year period. The current 1998 Base Year Manual examined the average net tonnages from the period of January 1, 1995 to December 31, 1997 and established a rate per net tonnage based on this data. Rates are typically not changed between base years to provide stability to the assessment system.

- With the 2005 revaluation the rates have been reexamined and take into consideration the feedback received from the short line railways. Rate changes will be made to address any inequities that may have existed (net tonnage increased and rates decreased). Through consultations, it appears that this issue has now been resolved.

T – 11 The province review its present policy of maintenance of highways in urban centres. In cases where the province does not have equal or total control on speed, signage, access, and intersectional occurrences, then the maintenance of these portions should become the responsibility of the urban

municipalities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Subsection 153(2) of *The Urban Municipality Act, 1984* and subsection 12(2) of *The Cities Act* allows the province to assign responsibility for maintenance of a highway to the urban municipality or city. Agreements are negotiated on a case by case basis.

T – 12 The province review whether 1000 (or less) people in a community is the appropriate level, or whether it should be higher, for its policy of maintaining highways through these communities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A DHT review of highways through urban areas is in progress. The review will form the basis for policy development relating to urban jurisdictional issues. DHT expects to have this review completed in 2005-06.

Amendments To
Government of Saskatchewan's Progress Report on
The Action Committee On the Rural Economy (ACRE)
(February 23, 2005 version)

F-5
Government Response/Example(s):

- Government announced it is meeting its commitment to address property tax relief by dedicating $110 million in the 2005 and 2006 taxation years to reduce the education property levy on all properties in Saskatchewan. Through the Working Committee on Education Property Tax Relief, the Government of Saskatchewan is working with SARM, SUMA and the SSBA, to determine a long term solution to education property tax relief based on the solid foundation laid by the Education Equity Initiative of equity for students and taxpayers.

F-6
Government Response/Example(s):

- On May 13, 2004, Government announced its response to the Commission report, and identified a three-phased program to renew the K-12 school system. The three phases will focus on renewing and restructuring school divisions, developing a fairer system of funding from the provincial treasury, and committing to a long-term solution to lowering property taxes in Saskatchewan:

  1) The Education Equity Task Force was appointed to address the restructuring school divisions. On November 12, 2004, the Task Force presented the Minister of Learning with the map of restructured Saskatchewan school division boundaries and subdivisions in accordance to their mandate. The outcome produced 12 restructured school divisions. It is expected that with catholic school division amalgamations, the total will be 28 school divisions by January 1, 2006.

  2) The second phase is to direct the Department of Learning to work with its stakeholders to develop a new process for provincial funding of the K-12 school system – a new way to calculate the Foundation Operating Grants (F.O.G.). This will recognize the renewed fiscal capacity of the new divisions and put a new focus on equity, simplicity, and transparency of government funding. The existing F.O.G. External Reference Committee will be mechanism the Department will use to review and develop this new process.

  3) Government announced it is meeting its commitment to address property tax relief by dedicating $110 million in the 2005 and 2006 taxation years to reduce the education property levy on all properties in Saskatchewan. Through the Working Committee on Education Property Tax Relief, the Government of Saskatchewan is working with SARM, SUMA and the SSBA, to determine a long term solution to education property tax relief based on the solid foundation laid by the Education Equity Initiative of equity for students and taxpayers.

F- 27

- Government recognizes the importance of entrepreneurs as a driving force in our economy and that First Nation and Métis people are an integral part of that force.

- Government is discussing the importance of business entrepreneurship, education and training with all stakeholders and partners in the educational system and will continue to implement strategies that will enhance partnerships in these areas.

S-45

- The number of community schools has extended from urban elementary and northern schools to secondary and rural schools and have more than doubled since 2000 from 41 to 98.